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# THE TEMPTATION OF JESUS

## *AND OTHER SERMONS*

BY

ROBERT EYTON

SECOND IMPRESSION

LONDON
KEGAN PAUL, TRENCH, TRÜBNER & CO. LTD.
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REV. GERALD BLUNT,

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WITH DEEP GRATITUDE FOR ALL HIS KINDNESS THROUGH THE ELEVEN YEARS DURING WHICH WE HAVE BEEN NEIGHBOURS.

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# I.

## THE TEMPTATION OF JESUS.

### FIRST SUNDAY IN LENT, 1894.

"Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil."—ST MATTHEW iv. 1.

IT is very difficult for us to form any conception of the mysterious and subtle personality whose conflict with Jesus comes before us in the story of the Temptation. That there is such a personality seems clear from the questions he puts, and from the fact that Christ answers them. But the presentation of his personality is so subtle and so mysterious that we find all speculation on the subject barren and misleading.

How he came to be? How he touches the souls of men? How much or how little he knows? These are all questions natural enough about which traditional answers do not help us much; and when we turn to interrogate our own consciousness on the question, we do not get much further. That there is some power existing outside the life of man, which finds some means of co-operation with that

which is in man, in order to tempt us to sin—that much seems clear; but how that power acts, and whether any escape his influence altogether, and if so, how or why they do so—these are questions on which we can give no answers. Those people who most interrogate their consciousness, will, I think, agree that their own passions and the influence of others do not account for the whole of the temptation to which they have been subject; though on the other hand it may seem that there is established, by general consent, the consciousness that there is no such thing as purely external temptation; that nothing entirely outside ourselves would be able to tempt us, unless it were able to establish some kind of connexion with us. Temptation generally seems to proceed from the union of two powers, something outside ourselves conspiring with or finding an ally, with something inside ourselves, or some passion or force of our own nature conspiring with some enticement or inducement outside our own nature. The outside allurement may come through the persuasion or influence of others, but it does not do so always; sometimes it seems to come out of unseen forces, about which we can make guesses, but of which we know nothing; or out of invisible influences, of which the only thing we know is that they have intimate relations with our nature. All this must seem a little vague, but it helps us to understand the story of Christ's temptation; though

it does not throw any light on the questions of the nature of this subtle and mysterious external influence, which is not like that of other people, but which seems to be able to enter into relations with ourselves, and to provoke into action certain elements in our own nature. Again, there are those who seem altogether to escape this influence; some because they seem to be so constantly their own tempters that they need no such external influence; some because they are so completely ensnared by the fascination of some human personality that they cannot call their souls their own; while others seem to escape it through a curious combination of innocence and impassiveness, which sets one thinking and wondering whether there may not be, as it were, devil-proof natures. This much, at any rate, is obvious that, though all men are tempted, different kinds of temptation come to different men, and some seem altogether to escape these sensual allurements whereby the souls of others are perpetually tortured.

The truth seems to lie just here in this matter, that a man is tempted according * to the nature of the life which he is living. The nobler the kind of life he lives, the higher the temptations seem to be that assail him; so that we have very much, within certain limits, the power of regulating the nature of our temptations by settling the nature of

* Phillips Brooks' "Spiritual Man," p. 48.

our aims. Jesus Christ deliberately placed before Himself the higher life of sacrifice in living for the good of the world; and, therefore, His temptations came in the region of that higher life. The temptations that assail those who live with lower aims would have no power with Him; they could not even touch Him. He was tempted and tried according to those higher levels in which He lived. So it is with us. When we begin to consider, we easily understand that the literary man's temptations, or the artist's temptations, are quite different from those of the stockbroker or the banker. Moreover, men are not born with the same outfits; they bring into the world different natures; he that springs from the nobler stock brings the nobler nature, and he that comes of the baser stock brings the tainted nature, and, consequently, the temptations of the one seem far less than those of the other.

Is there any injustice here? We think so, perhaps, at first, but if we go on to consider things as they are, we see that it could not be otherwise.

God's whole method of dealing with the human race makes it impossible that He should interfere with inherited propensity, and send all souls into the world with exactly the same dispositions. We inherit what comes down to us, and we transmit what we are. The adjustment comes in here, that every kind of nature, which a man may inherit, has its own peculiar temptation. None is untempted. There

are no favourites of heaven who escape. If a man is free from the lower allurements, there still remain the higher temptations. Somewhere there is his battlefield. That none escapes, however noble his stock, is shown us by the fierceness and severity of Christ's temptation. He was not tempted to the base things which belong to the lower appetites; but there came to Him temptations strong in proportion to their subtlety, intense in proportion to their spirituality; difficult because they appealed to the most divine and noble parts of His life, because they were within the region which His own plan of life made a peculiarly dangerous one for Him. The temptation to use His powers is just the temptation that would appeal to that consciousness of growing strength that belongs to early manhood; the temptation to test God's love appealed to His old and dearly-cherished child-consciousness that in some special way he belonged to God—that consciousness, so restful, so certain, so strong; while the temptation to grasp the kingdoms of the world just appealed to His consciousness of that life-work which was opening before Him. All through His boyhood this triple consciousness had been growing and working within Him. These were the three main factors of His life, which grew as He grew—viz., the desire to use His powers, the strong consciousness of belonging to God, and the feeling that His life-work would be the saving of the world.

To these—the dreams, the visions, the possessions of His inmost life—to these the temptation came. How fierce, yet how grand, that temptation was. There He stands on the mountain, looking down upon Jerusalem, and seeing all those who were there being tempted to lust, or greed, or envy, or drunkenness, or gluttony, or hypocrisy; and He stands above them untouched by their temptations, and yet tempted far more than they all,—tempted in that which is closest to Him; tempted to use His God-given powers; tempted to test the reality of that sweet Love which had been the ruling inspiration of His boyhood; tempted to throw Himself, as it were, into the completion of His life-work by one supreme act.

Ah, what are all the lower temptations compared to these? How deep, how mysterious, how rending the fierce agony with which He wrestles to put from Him the alluring visions, which are bound up with all that is best and most precious and most beautiful in the history of His consciousness, with all that is dearest in the unselfish dreams and golden visions of His boyhood. Is it not most true that the higher nature does not escape? Let us not envy it, for it goes through a fiercer trial than any which we experience! Gold must be tried by fire: the higher the nature, the more critical the temptation. And this is what we are always finding as we go through life, as we struggle onwards. We pass up and beyond

the lower levels where failure seems so ghastly, so low, so prolific of self-disgust, we heave a sigh of relief; "well, at any rate," we cry, "that is done with"; but we find that, led by the Father's hand, we only pass to higher temptations, there is no rest here, we only go on to temptations which are the tokens of a higher kind of life; we, too, must die fighting. The very consciousness of higher things brings its own proper danger; and the reason why so many men, who have conquered the lower temptations, remain stunted — (like the drunkard who abandons his drink only to become a mouthing and self-satisfied Pharisee)—is that they dwell on past achievement; they do not see that to conquer one temptation only means to mount up to meet a higher one, that there is no end to the fighting until the great campaign is over. Is it so with you? The grosser appetites tempt you no longer; perhaps they never did; you can pass the door of a public-house and the base places of the city and feel no struggle; you feel a disgust at the gamblers' resort, where men go to try to get the best of their brothers; you despise the mean devices of the company promoter, who sets his trap for the widow and orphan; you hate the foul allusion and the profane story. It is well, but you too have a battle to fight. Some day there comes to you the Christ-consciousness—the consciousness that you must use your powers. Because you are God's own child, you must

work for God; and what subtle allurement of self-love there lies in that! In the consciousness of what He meant you to do, and in the realisation of it, there lurk the possibilities of fierce, hard, and bitter temptations. No man escapes altogether; to try to escape means to sink and be defeated.

Temptation, then, is universal. The broad lesson, taught by the fact that Christ was tempted, is that for the higher natures the fiercer temptations are reserved. We shall consider hereafter the nature of those higher temptations. To-day I want to apply all that we have been considering to a difficulty characteristic of our own day.

We feel, some of us, the superior attractiveness of modern forms of thought to the ordinary presentations of religion. We make the discovery that religious people are often feeble and ineffective—the soft padding of the universe—and that, when they are otherwise, it is often at the expense of their religion. We see how poor and unworthy an attitude the Christian religion, in so far as it is represented by those in high office, sometimes assumes. On great national questions like *the one now before us, it maintains its hard, unsympathetic, un-Christlike attitude, and the temptation is to say, "if that is religion, I will not be religious; I will turn away and live the lower life." The only way to conquer

* The Parish Councils Bill was in Committee in the House of Lords when this sermon was preached.

the temptation is not to throw things over, but to increase one's religion. The only way to conquer the false religion is by manifesting the true. Any false relation to God which you detect in others or yourself, and which makes them bigoted, or narrow, or unsympathetic, is to be encountered and overcome by establishing a true relation to Him. The modern temptation of the higher nature is to say, "Lest I become bigoted I will cease to be religious. Since God's service is beset by so many difficulties, since official ecclesiasticism is so barren and unsympathetic in its public action, I will give it up and establish myself safely on lower ground." And the answer taught by the attitude of Jesus is, "Instead of that you must go forward, and become more than ever a servant of God." Want of sympathy and narrowness is not the result of too much religion, but of too little. The real servant of God becomes tolerant and charitable because he is religious, and not in spite of it.

Any one who tries to follow Christ will be likely to find that he has temptations that come to him through his religion, temptations to be Pharisaical and bitter, temptations to be hard and narrow, temptations to be a mere partisan. The escape from these is not through less religion, but through more; the escape is by a fuller entrance into that religious spirit from which the dangers have proceeded. As a matter of fact, the best result in us of

temptation resisted is a new charity, a new pitifulness, a new habit of making allowances. "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation"—blessed because it makes him not only strong, but pitiful and merciful—it gives to him a new fellow-feeling with those who are tempted to any evil. The untempted are the hard and bitter; the tempted, who have endured and conquered temptation, are the merciful and the compassionate.

One may surely believe that even into the nature of Christ Himself there came new charity out of His own struggle—a new feeling of pity for His brethren?* As He looked into the faces of tempted men and women in the streets of Jerusalem—as He saw the hardness of licentiousness, the wreckage of drunkenness—did He not feel "I have been there with them, though it was in a higher region, yet I know what it is to feel that mysterious power of Satan, and to cling to God as the only Refuge? I know that what saved Me can save them?" And so He threw Himself with a new pity into the struggle for Magdalene and the tortured demoniac. He helped every soul with a power and a pity that was intensified by His own temptation.

And as He is, so are we in this world—temptation resisted and conquered gives us power; therein is its best result.

In whatever region of life, higher or lower, the

* Phillips Brooks' "Spiritual Man," p. 56.

struggle comes, do not let us despise ourselves, even though our temptations seem shameful. Let us pray that we may come out of them with a profound sense of God's help, and with an absolute reliance on Him. God help us so to follow our Master in these forty days, that we may establish within ourselves this attitude—a deepened trust in God, an eager desire to purify ourselves, and a great love and pity for others who are tempted. Then we shall not live in vain; then—however bitter the struggle—we shall carry over into that other life, where things will grow to their full development, the real foundation of a noble and a perfect life.

## II.

# THE TEMPTATION OF JESUS.

### God or Bread.

### SECOND SUNDAY IN LENT, 1894.

"And when the tempter came to Him, he said, If Thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread. But He answered and said, It is written, man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God."—St Matthew iv. 3, 4.

Jesus then was tempted, as we have seen, in the higher kind of life in which He lived. Every man is so tempted; the nobler the kind of life he lives, the higher the temptations are that assail him. The lower temptations beset the lower kinds of life. No one escapes. We see this in the first temptation. The more closely we analyse it, the more convinced we become of two things—the tremendous force which it derived from its attendant circumstances, and its entire adaptation to the very highest desires and aims of Christ's whole Being.

I. The circumstances of this temptation — the forty days' fast, the loneliness and hunger—are so unique and extraordinary, that they sometimes occupy in our minds too large a place. It is possible to represent the temptation as being only

one to procure food in a wrong way; it was that, but it was much more. There was a deeper, more subtle temptation that assailed the higher nature, which we must consider if we are to understand it. But as so often happens with ourselves, the real question at issue is hidden or obscured by the immediate surroundings; the form of the temptation obscures its reality. Let us briefly glance at the circumstances. There was a terrible bodily want oppressing Christ. He was hungry, grievously hungry. He was experiencing to the full extent that strong craving of our nature which sometimes turns men into brutes. His tongue was parched and blackened with the terrible heat of the wilderness. He was worn out with hunger. Every circumstance conspired to render the allurement of food as strong as possible. Moreover, His human experience had never before brought Him into contact with so terrible a necessity. He had lived the ordinary simple, protected, well-nourished life of a Jewish peasant, lived as many a young man now does in a home where he has never come face to face with want. All would agree that, when want comes suddenly, it tries a man sorely. Those who have read the story of the Abyssinian expedition must have felt how the first appearance of difficulty, the severe trials of the first few days, showed the real temper, the heroic courage of the man,* whose early death

* Sir Gerald Portal died just before this sermon was preached.

every one has just felt to be a loss to the whole nation. And to come into this terrible experience at once, and to come into it alone and with no hope of relief from it save the yielding to this offer, was a great trial in itself. Hitherto Jesus had lived, without strain and without difficulty, under the compulsion of the higher nature; now the compulsion of the lower nature is ingeniously worked, by stress of circumstances, into what is really a temptation of His higher nature. Though it be met, and met fearlessly and unhesitatingly, though the answer comes in ringing tones—"not by bread alone, but by every word of God," there is still the sense of a fierce struggle borne in upon us. The human craving for food is strong. And so He does not say, "I, as Son of God, have no need of human nourishment, I have Divine sustenance," but "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." He recognises the difficulty of the circumstances. He puts Himself on a level with all those who are tempted, through bodily craving, to any kind of sin. He puts before each and all the real issue in its nakedness—bread or God—bread in the widest sense—bread as including every legitimate satisfaction of our desires and needs —and He says to each and all that God must come first. ["Man," He says in effect, "cannot be satisfied with bread—with anything material—he cannot live upon it; there are portions of his nature which it

will not nourish—cravings which it will not satisfy." "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God"; and if the choice be between one and the other—bread or God—and it often must be, then there is no question which is to gain the day. If man is to *live*, he must satisfy the deeper cravings first.

And this answer He gives out of His human consciousness. He had discovered within Himself as Man certain powers, powers of work, powers of study, powers of sacrifice, powers of suffering for others; what is to become of those powers if He lives for bread alone, if He makes material comfort His one and only object? Undoubtedly those powers will dwindle and decay. And yet more; He appeals beyond Himself to the experience of mankind. This bald, naked choice has been before men in other days, whether they should gratify the flesh or live for higher objects; and they have left it on record that though they may have missed other things by choosing truth and duty, they yet found their true life. "It is written" in human experience, Moses found it after forty years in the wilderness and tells it to the people just as they are entering the Promised Land. Moses wrote it down as the result of his experience of all the vicissitudes and pains and wants of the wilderness. "It is written" deep in the records of human experience, in failures and successes, in the lives of David, and Solomon,

and Saul, and all the prophets. Out of all the failures of human life and all its splendid successes, this comes out clear and unquestionable, that man does not, cannot, shall not live by bread—*i.e.*, by pleasure, or comfort, or ambition, or by any material enjoyment alone, "but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God," by truth and duty and the will of God. In spite, then, of circumstances, hard, difficult, dreary circumstances, the temptation to consider the lower needs as more pressing than the higher was overcome.

Brethren, herein lies our temptation so often. This is just the place where, on our lower levels, the real difficulty often meets us. True, there seems to be no special trial moment in many a life when the issue is presented; there is nothing dramatic, nothing but what is humdrum and ordinary and commonplace in the fashion in which the temptation comes to us; there is no wilderness, no awful mountain, no sense of the supreme importance of the moment such as Christ had; but for all that, to you and to me, and to all, the temptation does come—which will you have, bread or God? Bread in the widest sense—enjoyment of any kind, what ministers to the lower appetites in any fashion, or God—truth, and duty, and the will of God? It does not come merely to the sensualist and to the glutton, it comes to all in some way. It comes to you every Lent; then the naked issue is—bread or God.

Will you put away the lower that the higher may come to you, or will you clutch at the lower and deaden your soul to God's voice more and more? It comes to the student when the choice is before him—shall he be thorough or shall he be superficial, a smatterer, a retailer of other men's goods? Shall he be scientific or encyclopædic? shall he go to the bottom or dabble on the surface? shall he live by bread or by "every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God?" It comes to the man of business: shall he conform to the custom of trade, or shall he refuse to do anything that his conscience tells him is not honest; shall he try to best others in bargains or to cheapen unfairly what he wants to buy, or shall he deal as he would be dealt with? It comes to the director of companies: shall he lend his name as a trap to catch the unwary and pass accounts into which he has never looked, or shall he insist on knowing about all that is done where he lends his name? It comes to the Member of Parliament: shall he think what is really good for people, and vote for that, or shall he consult the dictates of faction or the selfish interests of his own class? It comes to every lawyer: shall he deal rightly with interests entrusted to him, or shall he pocket his fee and leave his clients to take care of themselves? It comes to every parent: shall the children have the best care and attention for their upbringing, or shall they be playthings in our leisure hours, and

shall all higher care of them, moral, spiritual, mental, be left to others? Bread or God—the lower line of custom, convenience, conventionality, or the higher line of duty and conscientious work, and faithful dealing with men for God's sake. This was the first issue decided in the wilderness—the issue that is for ever and under all forms repeating itself. And every time we yield at such moments, every time we refuse our life work and turn aside to pleasure or amusement or base profit, the consequences though unseen are real. They write themselves on you as well as flow out to others. If you could see yourself as you are, every weak yielding to temptation of which you have not repented, has left its mark on you. It writes itself in a lowered inward vitality, in a less generous nature, in a pinched heart, in narrowed interests, in a deepened selfishness, in a cramped and awkward soul-movement. Such consequences are no creations of a morbid imagination; they are things that really happen, and our one safety is to guard against them before it be too late.

This, then, is the lesson that comes out of the circumstances of the first temptation. The motives for the conflict are embedded within our own nature. Christ found in His Humanity, with all its aches and pains and tastes and predilections, the root conviction that man does not live by bread alone, that he has a higher life, whose claims must be first satisfied. And men are always finding the same

thing in their own consciousness; sometimes bitterly, at the end of a long misspent life, sometimes hopefully, when life is young, and habits are easily changed. The higher necessities and capacities do not always sleep. Sometimes there does arise a deep, strong, earnest craving to give up what is proper and safe and respectable and conventional, and to seek just what is true and good and right; to get rid of artificial standards, and simply to take the Sermon on the Mount and live by it, even if men call you a lunatic? At such moments we get a sight of our possible selves, we have a vision, if only a vision, of that self of ours that has been lying in consciousness of God ever since he made us in His Own Image. For the moral necessities of our nature are as real as physical ones. They are far more exacting in their demands. They tell us, whenever we will listen, that we were not made to eat and to drink, and to dance and to play, and to rot in the end, but that we were meant to live, and that to live means this first and foremost—to be loyal to truth and duty, to every high call and noble inspiration, to "every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God."

II. I pass on for a few moments to what was deeper in this temptation. It was an appeal to the Divine consciousness of Christ. I think, if we dwell on it, we shall see that terrible as was the constraining force of circumstances, the hard and bitter edge of

temptation smote Him here most keenly. He was passing through that deeply interesting period of life, when boyhood passes into manhood, when the beautiful unselfconsciousness which is so attractive in earlier stages becomes reflective. He had been shut off from the world in His quiet home at Nazareth that His development must have been slow according to modern ideas. "He was passing *(it has been well said) through those years so full of peril, so full of fascination, so rich and mysterious to the personal being who passes through them; years in which the boy is finding himself a man, and understands neither the boyhood through which he is passing nor the manhood on which he is entering." It is a time of life in which the hardest temptations often come from the consciousness of the higher qualities in a nature which is trying to understand itself. We often see the result of these temptations in an inordinate conceit, and in a tiresome instability of conviction, but the one and the other is the stumbling effort to realise what the higher qualities, of which the young man is conscious, really mean and involve.

To Jesus the time had come when all the dreams and aspirations of His youth had begun to assume a more concrete form. He had become conscious of the supreme qualities of His nature; that there was that in Him which was not in others; that He was

* Phillips Brooks' "Spiritual Man," pp. 50, 51.

identified with the Divine Life in some close fashion. And with that growing consciousness there must have come the strongest disposition to test His powers, to see what was in Him. So that the spiritual force of the temptation goes far deeper than the mere physical circumstances. The moment has come to test this growing consciousness of Divinity; that moment is at the first entrance of youth into the world, at the first contact with things as they are; and the impulse to try His strength must have been immense. 'It is as though Satan said "Use this power in You; realize yourself through it; do what God would do; turn these stones into bread."' There lay the hidden force of temptation to the higher nature of Jesus. In His resistance lies the earnest of His deep special sympathy with every young man in present trials. He brushed, as it were, the mere physical inducement away, so that it became a subordinate thing; He realised to the full, as His answer shews, that the real struggle lay in the fact that at last there was before Him an opportunity to realise Himself, to test His consciousness, to shew what was in Him, and that supreme temptation He overcame.

There is a moral grandeur about it all viewed in that way. And yet how near to us it brings Him. We know the temptation—some of us who are no longer young—to fall in with the ways of our time, to do what we are told is indispensable to getting

on, to push ourselves into notice, to advertise ourselves, to show what we are; we know, it may be, how hard it is to repress the consciousness that, if only we could make ourselves heard, we could put things straight; we see the faults, the failures, the bunglings of others. We know (without any conceit) that we could do things better, and, perhaps, if we were to push ourselves, if we would only condescend a bit to lower levels, and sink to self-advertisement, we might win a real name and lead others to a great victory.

So Christ might have argued, but in Him there was that clear insight which shewed Him the fallacy of all such reasoning; there was in Him the self-repression which made it possible for him to say "No" to it. Surely he teaches us here the highest and best lessons—that not by self-display, even as a means to great ends, not by a self-realisation that ministers to our lower self, but by really catching and treasuring our highest inspirations, by living on "every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God," shall we do our real work, and live our true lives, and be our best selves.

## III.

# THE TEMPTATION OF JESUS.

### "Cast Thyself Down."

THIRD SUNDAY IN LENT, 1894.

"Then the devil taketh Him up into the Holy City, and setteth Him on a pinnacle of the temple, and saith unto Him, If Thou be the Son of God, cast Thyself down, for it is written, He shall give His angels charge concerning Thee; and in their hands they shall bear Thee up, lest at any time Thou dash Thy foot against a stone. Jesus said unto him, It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God."—St Matthew iv. 5, 6, 7.

We have seen that the real stress and force of these temptations lay in their subtle appeal to Christ's higher self—to His growing consciousness of His real nature and of the work before Him. This we saw to be the real inward meaning of the first Temptation, however much it may be obscured by its circumstances. In the second Temptation, the appeal is made directly to the consciousness of the Father's love: and here the circumstances fall into the background. The devil sets Him, not on a pinnacle, but on the topmost pinnacle of the Temple, on the summit of the Stoa Basilika, which towered over the southern extremity of that magnificent pile of buildings—on a point from which (so the Jewish historian tells us) no one could gaze down

into the ravine below, without his brain growing giddy at the hideous depth of the abyss.

On such a place, then, the whisper of temptation recalled to Him that which had ever been the precious treasure of His childhood—viz., the consciousness of the Father's love—the consciousness that in a special, a particular and supreme fashion, He was related to the Father, that He was in the bosom of the Father, that the Father held Him in the hollow of His hand, that in some unutterable fashion He was identified with Him—that consciousness which by degrees possessed His whole nature and flooded every power, as it awoke within Him, with a new and strange delight — that consciousness whose dawning gilded with so inexpressible a joy every dream, every vision, and every wish of His boyhood. An undisturbed repose in the perfect Love, that is Love indeed, had been His joy, His peace, His inspiration, His spiritual environment; and it was to this the temptation came. "Test it," Satan whispered, "nothing is certain till it is tried; surely you are not afraid that it will not stand the trial; surely the sweet consciousness of an unfolding and enwrapping love that 'the eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms'; surely that will be all the more precious when it is tested, tried, and put to the proof. Here is the opportunity, cast Thyself down and He will keep Thee; prove to me and to all that this consciousness

of His love, in which you live, is no dream, no mere hallucination born of self-brooding. Experience the delight of testing it; find out by that sure test how much greater and deeper the reality is than aught which could represent it. Cast Thyself down and He will keep Thee; He will show Thee how truly and utterly His Thou art. The very place demands it. Is it not Thy Father's house? Is it not here that the prophets told of Thee; nay, is it not here that Anna and Simeon welcomed Thee and spake of Thee? Is it not here that, while yet a child, Thou didst cause all to marvel by the wisdom of Thy answers? Does not the very place cry out? And see the encircling angels wait; in their hands they shall bear Thee up; see how the people down there in the court who expect Thee will greet Thee as Messiah, as fulfilling the well-known prophecy: 'The Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to His temple.'"

So subtle, so specious, so plausible was this second temptation. It seemed to call Him to show His trust in what He had always treasured as His dearest possession — the consciousness of His Father's love. It seemed as though, if He were to resist, He would be owning that, when put to the test and the proof, He had no real confidence in what was the mainstay of His life— viz., the certainty that the Father held Him in the hollow of His hand.

There is something very fascinating in the picture. It seems to possess us for the time. It affects us like some wonderful picture, to which perhaps we have come amidst yards of canvas and colour in some picture gallery, and which tells us a story that answers to something within us which reveals our own trial, perhaps our own weakness, our own sin, or our own victory. Anyhow, it touches something within us, and seems to drag us back again and again to look at it. So this temptation seems grand, unutterably splendid in its surroundings; and yet, looked at closely, how strangely it manifests what we have felt and known to be our own special trial, and to have caused, perhaps, our own bitter failure.

We have thought, perhaps, that we could risk something because we were so certain of ourselves, so certain of God, so certain that He would keep us, so certain of our principles; and we have gone to the edge and found ourselves—we scarcely know how — defeated, humbled, scarred, and shamed. Surely the thing comes home to some of us; surely the one answer, "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God"—thou shalt not make wanton experiments on the certainty of His love or on the depth of His pity; thou shalt not go into danger except when the call of duty is certain—commends itself to our own experience.

How can we tempt God? How did they tempt

Him, of whom these words were spoken? They were in the wilderness; they lacked water, and hitherto God had guided, fed, and loved them; they had held fast to the consciousness of His guiding hand; could they suppose that He would leave them to perish? What did they need but calmly to trust in His promise and right soon would the wilderness have broken forth into streams? How did they behave towards Him who had never failed them? They broke into angry murmurs; they shouted with indignation; they clamoured for the smiting of the rock as their right. They tempted God, so little was their trust in God's daily care; there was no faith and no hope in their attitude; "they strove with the Lord"—it was temper, it was rebellion, it was sin.

"Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God." Are we never in the habit of tempting Him, of making experiments upon His Love in the way which Christ's love refused to do?

I. Take it in the simplest way, do we know what it is to be tempted to violate the laws of nature? If we think of it closely, it was a natural law, the law of gravitation which Christ refused to violate. The natural world exists for man; the wind and the storm; the everlasting hills and the changing glory of the sea; the beauties of nature all are for us. Man has made them minister to his

happiness and decrease his trial by simple obedience to nature's laws.

Is there no voice of God in this? Is not nature the book of God written visibly before our eyes? If mankind had listened to that voice, had refused to cast itself down from that Temple pinnacle; if mankind had always striven faithfully and humbly to understand and to obey nature, how different the world would be; there would be peace and prosperity among nations; there would be health and happiness; there would be calm and secure moral life, and that by merely obeying the laws of nature as the Voice of God, "Then shall the earth bring forth her increase, and God, even our God, shall give us his blessing."

Pain, disease, death—just think to what a hideous extent they are caused by violating the laws of nature! Pain, disease, death—the ghastly sickening death, which is not the natural decay, but the outcome of some vile poison taken into the system—how terrible it seems when it snatches some dear life away that has wound itself round your heart! What are such deaths but the stern instant inexorable penalties that are affixed by nature to the violation of her laws? The germs of disease which spread hideous death and woe through a city, arise from the neglect of nature's laws in some ill-drained tenement. Only by obedience to those laws can man preserve a sound mind in a sound body.

Over every stern penalty that attends the violation of nature's laws; on every impaired constitution, which is the result of excess or neglect; on every drunkard's shaking hand, there is written the warning, "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God." Any suffering, any peril of infection or danger that is endured for the sake of duty, brings with it the certainty of the "everlasting arms," and, though we may suffer, we are safe; "the pestilence that walketh in darkness, and the sickness that destroyeth in the noonday" need have no terrors for us; for even if they smite us we know that "all things work together for good to them that love God"; but when you neglect the precautions of common-sense or the warnings of your physician, because you are too weak or too self-indulgent to obey him and the natural results follow, then you cannot expect the consciousness of the Father's protecting love; over those stern penalties it is written, "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God." Go where duty calls you—whatever the apparent risk—go if even risk of life is involved, but shrink, oh, shrink from wantonly defying in any way those laws of nature which are the emanations of the Divine Being; remember that your physical well-being is dear to God.

II. This is elementary enough; let us go deeper. In what way do we follow most closely our Master to the pinnacle of the Temple? Surely through

the greatness of our being, by the freedom of our wills, by our sense of immortality, by the consciousness that we are the Father's children. And alas! by every wilful sin, by every deliberate sin we do fling ourselves down into shame and degradation, into guilt and fear, into retribution, it may be into final loss. And yet, how calmly we speak of sin as if it were no great harm—only a matter of a little sorrow afterwards! How easily we assume that sin is more interesting than holiness; that it excites the imagination more than the poorer, thinner, staler round of virtuous living. As a matter of fact, there is nothing more ugly and disgusting than a life of indulgence in the coarser passions. One of the hopeful signs of the present day is the deepening of the conviction in the drama and in the tale that "the wages of sin is death"; that the sowing of wild oats means reaping hideous consequences. No doubt the story is often told with settings that lack the sense of conscientiousness about them, and that strike one as scarcely impressed with the moral gravity of the subjects with which they deal. But, anyway, they are an advance on the stupid and untrue thinness of the last century plays and novels, which generally aimed at whitewashing the scoundrel through a momentary repentance and leaving him to win all the applause; or which represented the virtuous man as a Charles Surface

—a cold, unlovely, and uninteresting prig. Our novelists have come to see that "you cannot touch pitch and not be defiled." The very poet who once adopted the passions as his only theme, has thrown all his later force with "almost biblical seriousness into the denunciation of the weariness and cruelty of unnatural hunger."

No doubt the presentments of some modern moralists in fiction and on the stage seem ghastly and unwholesome; and yet, I suppose, there are natures who learn in that way and from such presentments, on whom a more refined treatment would be thrown away. But it may be well to preserve our balance in such matters. The reason why sin is its own avenger is not because there is some innate hardness in things, but because "God spake these words and said, thou shalt not," because righteousness is the expression of God's inner life, and also the only preservative of man's true life. Every violation of God's law is as though we flung ourselves from the temple's pinnacle into the dark ravine, to see whether somehow or other God would step in and avert the consequences; to see whether we might safely defy the law of retribution.

But then the thought comes in, "We may fling ourselves down and then repent of it; others have done so, why not we?" There is a saying of St Augustine which always should be in our minds,

"God has promised forgiveness to those who repent, but he has not promised repentance to those who sin." God will not work miracles to save us if we fling ourselves down; the very feeling that we can repent afterwards produces just that insincerity which makes repentance practically impossible. Too often when we talk of repenting we mean forgetting. We think that time will make a change, but what is time but a mere condition of our present being? Time can make no change. That which has been is.

Brethren,* it has been well said that more men destroy themselves by hope than by despair, not by clear, resolute, courageous "hope that maketh not ashamed," but by vague, idle, thin hope that sighs, and sins while it sighs, and says, 'Let us hope that some day we may be better.' If you have cast yourself down and experienced the bitterness of that dark valley of shame and humiliation, if you have tampered with your purity, or given way to secret sin, or connived at dishonesty, or grown into looking at everything from the standpoint of self, if you have cast yourself down and experienced the bitterness, the hardness of sin, then we would say, "Hope, for there is hope yet." But if you are balancing yourself on a pinnacle of the temple, hovering between the choice of bread and of God, trying to see how you can make a compromise between conscience and

* *Cf.* Farrar's "Voices of God," p. 96.

inclination, if you are saying, "I will fling myself down this once, and then no more," to you let us say to-night, "Hope for nothing beyond," for hope in your case is destructive ruin, the only hope is that you may hear the warning, "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God."

God is merciful, you say, yes, "there is mercy with Thee—*therefore shalt thou be feared.*" God is merciful, but did ever anyone yet presume on His mercy and not find that he loves us too well to let us make His love an instrument of our own destruction? Ah, I speak perhaps to some who are trembling on the brink. Before you is still the alternative, the choice between what you know to be wrong and a resolute "No, I will not tempt Him." There is the subtle tempter at your elbow, there is the whisper, "Only this once, and then no more; then you can repent and reform, and keep any number of Lents, and all will be as though it had not been." My friend, in the ears of thousands of your fellow men and women has that whisper sounded, and the result has been misery, self-contempt, ruin; could they speak to you they would say with one voice, there is but one safety, "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God." Trust Him, but tempt Him not; trust Him, thou art His child; trust Him, because "the hairs of thy head are numbered;" trust Him, for "He is about thy bed and about thy path;" trust Him, and "He shall give His angels charge concerning Thee"; thou

shalt know the sweet child-consciousness of repose on "the everlasting arms," "when thou passest through the rivers He will be with thee, and the waters shall not overflow thee." Trust Him, and He will be with thee in the hour of accident, in the danger, the difficulty, the hard crisis, the shadow of death ; only trust him in faith, in obedience, in child-like humility. But remember, oh remember, that to provoke Him, to tempt Him, to play tricks with conscience, to experiment on His love, is the gravest, the most terrible of all perils. Remember that He Who bids thee hope aud struggle in the darkest hour, yet warns thee so earnestly not to go, through insolence, or self-will, or impatience, into that hour ; that He Who would not quench scorching flax, has warned thee of a death which is death indeed—a death which comes of presumption—a death, after which men do not repent because they do not wish to.

## IV.

# THE TEMPTATION OF JESUS.

### The Avoidance of the Cross.

FOURTH SUNDAY IN LENT, 1894.

"Again, the devil taketh Him up into an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them; and saith unto Him, All these things will I give Thee, if Thou wilt fall down and worship me. Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve."—St Matthew iv. 8, 9, 10.

It was the last, the most daring appeal—an appeal born of despair—to Christ's higher nature, to His consciousness both of the purposes of the commission that was laid on Him, and of the duty that was before Him. He was meant to be the Saviour, the Lord of the whole world; and in some fashion the tempter brought before Him the kingdoms of the world, shewed Him the empire for which He was longing, and offered to withdraw himself from it—*i.e.*, offered to take his odious, evil influence out of it, to tempt the weak no more. And all this for one trifling act of homage, "Forget God for a moment, and everything shall be yours!" Think of the position. Christ had come to redeem not the Jews only, but mankind. Indeed His special glory was that He should rule over the Gentiles. And here

He was in the wilderness, alone and deserted; His body was weak with fasting; His spirit was engaged in the fiercest of conflicts; all His powers seemed to be in a state of collapse through bodily weakness and soul struggle. He was just in one of those human conditions when men cry out to be let alone, to be given breathing time. He had just resisted two fierce assaults addressed to His higher nature; the last of which had appealed to the dearest of all His soul-possessions, the consciousness of His Father's love and care. And we think of Him sinking down exhausted, tired, worn-out in heart, and weak in limb. In a moment all is changed. He is transported in some trance, or through the presentation to Him of some mirage, to the summit of a mountain, whence all the kingdoms of the world and their glory can be seen; He is face to face with the whole world, and His consciousness tells Him that He is its Deliverer from the bondage of Satan, that He is its rightful Lord.

What was it which Christ saw? Surely it was a picture clear and vivid which stood out before His eyes—a picture of the world as it then was. Think of the world as it is at any time; the different scenes that are enacted in it at this hour; call up before your imagination all the varied occupations of human life, even in London. Could we see them as they are, what scenes of woe and tragic endurance of secret sin and open wrong, of real devotion and thin

formalism we should witness! Our Lord saw all the world as it then was; He saw the emperors surrounded by courtiers and nobles; He saw, too, the labourers in the fields, and the slaves in the mines; He saw the raging battles, and the plains covered with the dead when the battle was done; and He saw the poor peasant toiling in peaceful fields. All the varied pictures of human pleasure and woe passed before Him distinctly; each person stood out evident and plain in his own group—all he was, all he was doing and thinking. *What the kings were plotting and contriving; why the peasant was glad; what the slave was sighing for; why the captive wept in the bitterness of his loneliness; He saw it all. He knew it all perfectly; not as one knows through description, nor as one knows by imagination, but as one knows "the beating of one's own heart, and the weary throbbing of one's own head." He "knew what was in man," because He felt with all those whom He saw—they were His very own. The world in which they were sporting or weeping, fighting or idling, or toiling, was His own; its brightness, its beauty, which they were trying to enjoy or to mar, came from Him. The wisdom of some, the affection of others, had been His gift; He had made them feel that they could not live apart from one another; He had established the bonds of family life; He had taught them the

* *Cf.* F. D. Maurice "Sermon on the Third Temptation."

need of laws, and brought them into cities, and trained them for common life. He had done this, not once for all on the day of creation, but He "in Whom is Life, and Whose Life is the light of men," had been inspiring them every day with high thoughts and noble purposes, with good impulses and kindly charities, as well as with these powers of bodily life and enjoyment.

And then think of the sorrows and the tragedies of that picture—men turning and rending one another, men contriving, scheming, planning to outwit and to injure one another; family life violated by the sins of the fathers and the rebellions of children; national life broken by the pride and avarice of kings, and by governors who thought that the people were their natural prey—by kings like Herod, by governors like Pilate. All that was before Him. He saw too the glory of those kingdoms with their horrible contrasts; their outward glory, the glory of the majestic river and snow-clad mountain, of the spring's beauty, and summer's wealth; and saw also what they thought to be their glory—viz., that the strong should oppress the weak; He saw the crimes of tyranny, and injustice, and oppression, which were everywhere rife, while law and religion were being used to justify and encourage them. All this He beheld, all this confusion and misery passed in a moment of time before Him. And then remember that He had always so loved

this world—He, by whom all things were made—He by Whose instrumentality were its beauties and its possibilities, He, Who had once beheld it when it "was very good."—He was the heir to this kingdom, jarred and jangling as it was. He longed to deliver it from that evil power which was everywhere at work in it. And suddenly, as the passion for deliverance grows stronger and stronger while He gazes, He hears in His ear the whisper of the author of all these confusions and crimes, "All these will I give Thee—for they are mine, and I give them to whom I will—all these will I give Thee, if Thou wilt fall down and worship me." One trifling act of homage, one momentary turning away and forgetting God, and then so great a prize without a struggle, without a pang, without a cross, then the power to take the kingdoms and reign over them to their endless peace. Will it be objected that they were not Satan's to give? Of course, they were not his by rightful possession; but the temptation was then and is always to think that they were his; and there is always a great deal, as far as appearances go, to be said for such an assumption. It was hard to doubt that he had acquired them, for everywhere there were evidence of his terrible handiwork. The demoniacs were but the extreme representative of a very real power, to which men had so yielded themselves for generations that they seemed to be possessed by it with a kind of madness. Every-

where, in the cruelty of successful lust, in the bitterness of wrong, in the triumph of injustice, everywhere his boast was justified—the kingdoms were his in a very obvious and palpable way.

And from them he offered to disappear—to vanish; no trace of his odious reign should be left; he would breed confusion and despair no more. Would not the Son of Man—He Who loved the poor hungry aching hearts of the prisoners and captives, Who heard their sighs and groans, Who heard everything from the moan of the wounded animal, creeping away to hide its pain, to the captive's stifled sob of despair—would not He at once by this slight concession make all happy? Would He not at once establish His kingdom? Would He not deliver here and now the nation from bondage? Would it not be hard to make all these living sufferers wait for the slow long complex deliverance through Redemption? Would it not be a splendid exchange — so splendid that a slight sacrifice of principle might well be forgiven!—a splendid exchange for one trifling act of homage to inaugurate at once His benign and beautiful reign, to carry to each and all the message of joy and deliverance, to give all this at once, instead of enduring the long weary ministry, the bitter cross, the many failures of the Body to which He should commit His cause, —the faithlessness of Christians, the failures of Christendom? Oh, bright and alluring prospect!

Even we, with our earth-bound eyes can see it. Oh, splendid and glorious visions of nations living in peace and only striving with each other in arts and education, in perfection of family life, in the deliverance of the oppressed, in the comforting of the weary and the heavy-laden. Oh, bright and glorious vision; surely the price was but a small one to pay; surely the strictest might forgive a slight concession of principle; surely the love, the kindness, the sympathy, the mercy of Christ will prevail, and He will take the Kingdoms. He will rid them once and for ever of this vile and detestable oppressor, this dark shadow, this malign influence, the serpent that leaves his filthy trail on the fairest flowers; surely He will not refuse this offer which opens to all His brightest hopes, to all the dreams of His boyhood an immediate, a triumphant, a splendid fulfilment.* 'Spare Thyself' the tempter cries; "Spare Thyself long insults and years of thankless toil; spare thyself the anguish, the shame. the desertion, the cup, the baptism, the awful trial, take the kingdom. Nay, if thou wilt not think of Thyself, think of others; spare the disciples, Thy church, the millions of Christendom; spare them the centuries of trial and conflict, of sorrow and struggle, of failure and despair; spare them the sick moments of agony when they feel that God is not; spare them these struggles with fierce temptation; take

* *Cf.* C. J. Vaughan on "The Temptation."

the power, reign over them; let willing obedience and blessed peace be the earth's portion."

And for what? For one trifling act of homage of which none need know; for one small thing so easily done. Look what pains and woes of lives and souls it would prevent! Religion alike and humanity with one voice bid Thee save a race which, if Thou leavest it to struggle, may yet perish in spite of all."

My brethren, when we put it in that way, can we not enter into the strength of temptation? Can we help the conviction stealing uncomfortably over us, that a good deal of what goes by the name of Christian Religion — the kind of average religion which excessive devotion to what is safe and respectable produces—would urge Satan's arguments in favour of a kindly compromise quite as well as he could himself. Somehow there would seem to be borne to one's ears almost the accents of dignified and official ecclesiasticism as we know it, which is always moderate and judicious, and which always sees a middle way by which extremes can be avoided, and which gets so into the groove of compromise that it does not see when a principle has to be asserted and if necessary died for; when a stern rebuke of selfishness is the only contribution that a Christian who believes in Christ can make to some question. We are so familiar with the sleek ecclesiastic who never has a word of real power or of intense feeling to say for anything except perhaps

for the assertion of a privilege; we are so accustomed to extend to him either a warm adhesion or a tolerant acquiescence—a kind of sense that that is what one expects from a Church dignitary—that we do not see how the tempter's offer to Christ lurks still under his smooth and honeyed utterances.

Of course, Satan's offer suggested a falsehood. God had not given him the kingdom; it was only over willing souls that he reigned; but the lie there was half a truth. No man need serve him, no kingdom is his till it has renounced God; but power is power, and, however it be gained, remains power still, and we who know anything of the extent of evil influence see how great the offer was. If Christ had accepted his terms and had consented to be the ruler over an intelligible empire, such as Satan's withdrawal could give Him, and had let the people make Him a king and be their leader in every enterprise, 'the world itself would not have had crowns enough for Him.' He might have cast out Satan by Satan—*i.e.*, cast out evil by compromise with evil. He alone saw all that Satan's offer meant; He saw it, and without a moment's hesitation He flung it from Him; He balanced not gain with loss; He never stopped to regret that the path of duty was hard, stern, and rugged; He seized upon the compromise, and He crushed it to pieces with the right hand of obedience—"Get thee hence, Satan: for it is

written, thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve."

Surely these are warnings deep and lasting, written here. A warning to the Church. If it will make a compromise about God's truth and justice for the sake of State patronage ; if it fawns on Governments and keeps back Christ's truth on the questions of the hour—*e.g.*, says that He could not have meant what He said about doing unto men as we would that they should do unto us, that such words cannot apply to business transactions—if the Church, through her chief ministers, is found to say this ; if she acquiesces in the fatal dualism which would treat men as two selves, the religious self and the business self; if she does not declare for justice to the poor and for righteousness as a national policy, then her power is gone ; she is failing where Christ conquered ; fleeing where He stood firm ! Where right and wrong are concerned there is no possibility of compromise. Look at French history and see how the Church in France bolstered up and connived at every iniquity of the Bourbons ! Where is the indignant protest of an outraged righteousness in Louis XV.'s reign ? And then look on and see the fulfilment of the warning of the Master, that men will turn and "trample underfoot the salt that has lost its savour," in the ghastly scenes of the Revolution.

Surely there is a warning for ourselves lest we do evil that good may come; lest we gloze over with fine names what Christ calls sinful; lest we allow dislike or resentment, or difference of opinion to make us uncharitable, to divide His Church—in such ways we are trying to cast out Satan by Satan; we are ranging ourselves against Him who repelled as a hideous crime the proposal to gain the whole world by bending the knee to Satan. When the thought comes into your mind, as it perhaps has and will come, how by a little dishonesty, a little unfair dealing, you can better your chances in life, succeed better than if you are simply right and true, then be sure the devil is saying to you, "Fall down and worship me." To one the temptation comes in one way, to another in some other way; the hungry man is tempted to steal, the seller to hide the bad quality of his goods, the man who has done wrong to equivocate for the sake of keeping it hidden. There is a sort of desperation that leads men to say, "All is going badly, there is no help, I must give up struggling, I will do what I feel inclined." Ah! we so often want our own way, we are so often tempted to get it in wrong ways; we need the lesson of Christ's brave resistance. There is but one true attitude, "Get thee behind me, Satan."

And we need to dwell on this story in order to quicken our enthusiasm. Let us bless Him

from the bottom of our hearts that for us he endured those fiery trials, that He willed to know the bitter suffering of letting go things that are dear, and plans that are cherished because they are not right; let us bless Him for the deep human sympathy thus gained. He is our Brother; His hands are clasped in ours; "He suffered, being tempted." Even now, when He is on His Eternal Throne amid an innumerable company of angels, His heart beats strong and true with you in your wavering struggle to overcome the temptation to specious compromise—to be your best self, and to do the highest right you know.

## V.

# THE TEMPTATION OF JESUS.

### The Lifelong Warfare.

FIFTH SUNDAY IN LENT, 1894.

"And when the devil had ended all the temptation, he departed from Him for a season."—St Luke iv. 13.

Christ's temptation, then, did not end in the wilderness. The assault there, so fully described by two Evangelists, was only an earnest of that which was always trying Him. He was never free during the years of His Ministry from the devil's attack. Once it is described to us how He met him in the grim and ghastly solitude of the wilderness amid every natural terror: how He fought him under every guise and returned each time victorious. But though a veil is drawn over the details of the later onslaughts, they were assuredly made. The prize was too precious to be lightly surrendered. The devil watched each movement, caught each word, laid wait for each step from that day onward. We catch glimpses of his working when the lips of those who loved Him counselled ease and rebuked self-sacrifice, when the malice

of the hypocrite and the formalist gathered round Him; above all when Satan insinuated himself into the heart of one of His chosen friends, and thus added the consciousness of surrounding treachery to the burden of His life; and again when, in the last hour of terrible conflict, he tried to insinuate hard thoughts of God, to sow discord between Him and the Father.

If it was so with Him, must it not be so with us? In the warfare in which we are engaged there is no discharge. There are seasons of rest when, to us as to Him, angels come and minister. There is a holy and blessed calm which comes after some fierce struggle, when passion or sloth, or temper has been conquered. Let us treasure such periods, but let us not expect them to last. The devil only ceases to tempt those who sufficiently become their own tempters. For Christ the struggle with Satan was lifelong; it was the unceasing struggle between good and evil. It must have been so, for it represents and gathers up every struggle of His brethren. The struggle of good against evil is perpetual and world-wide, and is always carried on under Christ's guidance, it is always directed by Him. The effort of any soul in a heathen land to get away from sin and cast itself on a dimly felt mercy is linked to the struggle of the Great Master, though it has no consciousness of Him yet, it works towards Him as the blind

root beneath the ground struggles to reach the light and air. The efforts of those who, though they live in a Christian country have never come to know Him really, have had Him misrepresented to them, or have only known Him under a caricature, which conflicted with all their inborn notions of goodness—(their struggles to be unselfish, to overcome degrading faults, to get themselves free of bad habits)—though they allege no religious motive for them, and would probably disown any if challenged—are yet His workings within them. They know Him not, but He knoweth His own, and surely every one is truly His own who shares in any degree His character. All forces really strive after unity. One of the most beautiful developments of modern science is the way in which it has shown that processes in chemistry, in mechanics, and in nature, which have long been treated as due to a variety of powers, are gradually showing themselves to be the fruits of one mightier power, which, through many forms of application, is able to produce them all. The Christian belief in Christ has grown on the same lines. We do not now think of any struggle after righteousness which we may find in a heathen as a strange thing, a thing to moralise over or wonder at. We recognise at once the work of Him, who, in becoming man, became every man; who by His Spirit "fills the whole

world." We do not think it necessary to account for the goodness and gentleness and unselfishness of some so-called unbelievers by muttering some thin explanation about uncovenanted mercies, for we believe in the Incarnation, the man-becoming of the Son of God. We rejoice to find evidences of this unifying work of His which brings us through our common struggles into such close fellowship with those who seem to be cut off from us by their denial of all that gives us the ground of hope for ourselves. Wherever you find a man really resisting the lower line, be he called atheist, or heathen, positivist, or pantheist, there you find and gratefully recognise the Christ working within him. Once believe in the Holy Ghost; once accept the central truth of working Christianity—viz., that the Divine is at work, as an unseen Spirit throughout the world, always showing Christ and making His influence felt, even where from misapprehension men say that they do not serve Him; once grasp the blessed truth that you live under the dispensation of the Spirit, and then it is not hard to see that men everywhere, being really the same, are open to the same influence, and that it is to the one same goodness to which they are all brought by the power of the one same Spirit of Christ.

In one sense, Christianity is obliged to be exclusive; it must be so by the very terms of its

Founder's words: "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God." "Ye must be born again." It must be so because its creeds, its worship, its Sacraments are its own treasures; it cannot give them away; but the adjustment comes in just here, though it is exclusive in one sense, yet it can and does recognise that all goodness comes from the same source, and that what it has to do is to lead men to see the true source of that goodness as their highest privilege. The real unity of mankind consists in this universal possibility of soul-struggle after good. Men are different in colour, in structure, in habits, in tempers of mind, in all sorts of ways. Chinese, Hindoos, Europeans—what tremendous difference the three types bring before our minds! But the same largest ideas of right possess them; the same influence of great love softens them; and so Christ has His disciples, conscious or unconscious, in both hemispheres, wherever men are struggling for right and against wrong.

And here is our hope for the world, "He shall conquer"; that is the outcome of the threefold temptation—of that we are certain. He shall conquer in every man who struggles for good; in the Chinese as in the Buddhist or Parsee; in the African as in the European. He and none else will conquer however much this or that form of His religion may be changed or absorbed in higher

forms. His truth must doubtless be more completely realised by the Church before it can carry conviction to all; but to say that He does conquer in every struggle and that He will conquer finally is only to say, "I believe in Jesus Christ the Saviour of the world." The Christian belief in Christ brings together all the partial victories which are gained everywhere into one great victory which is the triumph of the living Lord.

This is our certainty in the age-long struggle of all that is good and noble and self-sacrificing with evil within and without. The devil's temptations may be varied or suspended, but they are never over in this age. As long as Christ lived in the flesh he assailed Him. The attack is now transferred to Christ in humanity, and there too he will assail Him to the end. In this warfare there is no discharge. Temptation is never over.

Sin everywhere hangs upon the border of goodness—that is the terrible fact that confronts us; as Edom was always upon the borders of Israel: so it is with the Church—history is full of it. There is always the spiritual element within every movement—the religious element that struggles after righteousness and believes in God; its presence is unmistakable; its form may be fantastic; but its spirit is unmistakable. Sometimes this spiritual element emerges in a doctrinal movement as in the fourth century; sometimes in the uprising of a mystical

piety as in Tauler's day; sometimes in a movement towards reality, as in the Reformation; sometimes in an ascetic purely individual movement, as in the rise of the conventual orders; sometimes in a social movement, which dwells passionately on the duty of seeking man's present welfare. Sometimes it insists on the necessity of the Divine assistance in a way that seems to dispense with human struggle; sometimes it is so insistent on human struggle that it seems to ignore the Divine assistance. But there it is, in some shape within the Christian Church and outside it—there is this assertion of the predominance of the spiritual power of God among the forces of men, this Israel in the midst of Asia. And from the time that it emerges it is always in a state of struggle and warfare. Right over against it there lies Edom—watchful, indefatigable, inexorable. If the good movement falters, down comes the mass of obstructive ignorance on its flank. If faith leaves a weak place undefended, if it seems to care for nothing but intellectual subtleties, and leaves moral sores to fester, down comes the quick eye of unbelief and rolls its forces against it there. If goodness goes to sleep for a bit, wickedness is across the valley in no time. The work of one century is good, and makes for righteousness, and it only seems to be succeeding when the next century comes in with its record of licentiousness and superstition.

No one great battle ever comes to settle the question between good and evil; "the devil departs for a season," and the cause of social order or religious enthusiasm makes great strides; but in time enthusiasm dies down, the cry for social progress seems to become a veil for secret wrong-doing, and then comes the terrible time, when, amid scandals and reactions, the enemy comes in like a flood and seems to triumph all round. So the fight goes on—an endless fight. Every now and then religion makes a great start, and seems to carry all before it in some great movement, but after a bit enthusiasm wears out and then comes the enemy's chance. The fervid Evangelicalism of Wesley and Simeon is discovered to have declined to a kid-glove Antinomianism which is nothing but a parody of its earlier principles, or to a blatant and offensive Protestantism, which perpetuates every most unpleasing form of self-assertion. Edom has seen its opportunity and swooped down. History is, on one side, a long commentary on the activity displayed by the powers of evil in respect to every great movement for good; the devil departs for a season, but he certainly does not carry himself away altogether; as it was with the Master, so it is now—he departs only to return in the day of trial.

And the same thing is always happening within our own personal experience. We have our good moments, all of us, our times of spirituality, our

better life, our token that bears witness to God's presence within us. 'In every man's heart there is a holy city—a Jerusalem where is a voice on the altar and a light above the mercy seat,'* where the Heavenly Father bears witness of His love and goodness, and tries to draw us to Himself, where He lets us hear His voice from within or without. And there too, within us, just hanging on the borders of the better life, is the ever-watchful Edom of the lower life, always on the look-out, always ready to take advantage. You mean to be pure, you want to be; you see the swinishness of impurity, you feel its shame; but some day you venture across the borderland by some low jest, by letting yourself read or hear some filth, by going to see some piece at the theatre which suggests a foulness that it dares not utter, or which under some guise of enforcing a moral lesson creates a depressing atmosphere; and down on you comes a foe that seizes you and bears you off captive to the heart of his detestable dominion; and then he keeps you a close prisoner, and only discharges you at the end, with a tottering body and a corrupted soul that turns all you touch to blackness, and with a dimmed spiritual vision that sees Divine things like ghosts, "men like trees walking." You mean to be humble; you hate the follies of conceit; you know yourself too well to buoy

* Phillips Brooks.

yourself up with the foolish flatteries which men forget as soon as they have uttered them; you mean to keep yourself from the darkness of pride; but some day you keep a careless feast of self-confidence, and before you know it, the shout of pride is in your ears; or you find in yourself the deepest pride of all, the pride that never utters itself by look or word because it is too proud, too confident of its own superiority to care for criticism or to value it as a means of improvement. You mean to be truthful, but one day you go to sleep and find yourself in a tight place where you must tell a lie or risk some one's favour, and the lie is in the midst of you, propagating its vile species before you know where you are. Evil is ever present with you. You cannot have one good fight and have done with it; you go on quietly, and think that temptation is over and the enemy is dead, and just when you feel yourself safe—there he is, more alive than ever.

The enemy shifts his point, but he is always there. Here is where the hopelessness comes in very often. In every man's heart there is somewhere a conviction that good is stronger than evil, that right is mightier than wrong. He would say so, looking at it from the outside as regards another. It is experience that undeceives us and bewilders us. The intruder is not cast out. Quite late on in life the two forces seem to struggle as incon-

clusively as ever. We grow weary and weak, and the danger is lest we sink down hopelessly into pessimism. We come to Church, we turn over the Bible, but we seem to find no deliverance and to gain no comfort.

And then is Christ's opportunity. He comes and tells us that He went through our lifelong experience that the devil left Him for a season only to return in the hour of His trial and weakness, and that He conquered — conquered through clinging to the Father when there seemed to be no Father near— and at the end could commit Himself to the Father in perfect confidence. "Father, into Thy hands I commend My Spirit." And how? By simply making no terms with evil. Is not your difficulty here? Is it not often the case that you only want the sin and the goodness to live on side by side, and not to fight with one another—that the sin is so bound up with something else in your heart that you do not want it to be destroyed, only to be quiescent. Is it the struggle that wearies you rather than the presence of sin that troubles you? Ah, then, you can get no help from Christ. He cannot help you unless you want to beat the old enemy down and kill him utterly; He will not negotiate for you a low compromise. He wants to make you righteous, and to set up His Kingdom in a nature all conquered and wholly possessed by Him.

Here is the way of life, no low compromise, but

victory. Here is the Saviour victorious for you: He has conquered sin; He has at last ended that terrible struggle in victory. Now let Him conquer you this Passiontide by His great love; now let the victory be complete; let Him lead you into real obedience, into real holiness; and then He can lead you on into that blessed happiness which is the certain result of a life surrendered entirely to Him.

## VI.

# THE ENDURING INFLUENCE OF IMMORTALITY.

"For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised; and if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins. . . . If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable."—1 CORINTHIANS xv. 16, 17, 19.

NO one who is at all sensitive to the currents of surrounding thought can help in these days reviewing his own position in reference to the life hereafter, the life which Easter brings before us, the life which is to follow and to grow out of this. Unquestionably the general tendency of Christian thought and feeling, not only in the Church of England, but in all forms of Christianity, is far less than it used to be in the direction of minimising the importance of this present life. We feel and know—we, at any rate, who are workers—that this life is worth living for the sake of what we can do and effect here, even without reference to a hereafter. We feel that to sit down and wait till the world is burnt up and a better one takes its place—to cry, "How long? O Lord, how long?" like those sufferers in the early Church, would be in us a

waste of golden opportunities. Here we are ; here is the world, with its interests, its occupations, its refreshments, its studies, its ever-deepening and extending field of knowledge, its marvellous possibilities, laid open before us by God. *Tradidit mundum disputationi eorum.* We are bound to be interested in all around us.

The pietistic policy of cursing this world as a means of getting to a better one will not help us to make the use of it which we were meant to make, and which it demands of us. The old allegory which represents the world as the City of Destruction is so far a misleading allegory ; for the world is a city in which citizenship may be both honourable and useful. We have all, or almost all of us, come to see this. We have looked more closely into Christ's words, and we find in them very little indeed about doing right that we may go to heaven, but we find a great deal about doing right that we may be like Him, or be with Him, or may know Him. We find very little in His words about any place hereafter, and a great deal about a companionship with Him, which is possible in a measure here, though only completely hereafter. "To see His face," "to walk with Him in white," still remain great and tremendous promises, not to be realized here ; but we feel that what they mean is beyond us. We spend less time in trying to realise the occupations or the beauty of the landscapes in

the other life. For many of us have come to see that what really matters most now, and what must matter infinitely more hereafter, is not our surroundings, but our attitude towards them—not circumstances, but character; that the essence of happiness is not to have what you want, but to *be* what you wish to be, that the soul consecrated to holiness would (like some student who forgets his meals because of his devotion to learning) be likely to forget to ask *where* it was to dwell and what it was to do, because it was so absorbed by the prospect of being something—*i.e.*, of advancing in holiness. What "place" may be in that other life we cannot even conjecture till we know something of the nature of that spiritual body with which we are to be associated, and however brilliantly we paint the abode of the righteous, it is still earth and not heaven if we conceive of it as apart from that spiritual fitness which alone will satisfy the soul of its inhabitants.

We have come to see all this partly from looking closer at Christ's words, but partly, also, we have been helped to this point by the progress of the world. The world is a better place for most people to live in than once it was. There is still plenty of room for improvement, but the world is even now a better place for the great mass to live in than it was (say) four hundred years ago. Though we may here and there find a dark spot where men cannot help

themselves, even though they would, yet the general level of human happiness is now far higher than it was in the Middle Ages, when the brawler and the ruffian often made life intolerable for the meek and gentle, and drove them into convent or monastery. When life here in this world was intolerable, in the days of persecution or of permitted violence, men naturally strained their eyes forward to the future after death, and constructed an ideal dream of happy and contented circumstances—often a very materialised heaven—where there would be no kings to force unwilling soldiers to fight battles, and no violence to desecrate peaceful homes. But as life here becomes more contented, more useful and cultivated, we are less inclined to crave for other conditions of which we know so little.

Hence it is that we are face to face with a new outlook, partly because we understand Christ's promises better, and partly because things here lead us less to crave for outward alterations—partly because, as has been said, "we could be very contented here if only we were good enough." And, given a happy life with interesting employments and a religious tendency not too enthusiastic or devout, that might be true. But then there comes the question, has the hereafter no place, is it going quietly to drop out of sight as a motive? Are we going to confront problems like pain and sorrow with even a modified creed of Epicurus? Are we going to face the fact

of death, with its apparent cruelty, its apparent hardness, its apparent blotting out and cutting short of high hopes, and to say, 'this is the end of all we know?' Shall we lose anything if we do? We have lost nothing—nay, we have rather gained by surrendering the idea of an Epicurean heaven. But has it come to this, that we can afford at last to have hope in Christ in this life only, that we can let the other world go and make a happy life on earth our ideal, be as good as we can and do as much good as we can and let the hereafter drop out of mind? Let us bring it to a practical test and see where we are. Conduct, it is said, is three-quarters or even let us say five-sixths of life, how then will conduct be affected if we say that we know nothing of hereafter, that there may be something after death and there may not—that the Apostles and others certainly thought they saw Christ on the other side of the grave in this world, but that they may have made a mistake, and we cannot waste our time in investigating it; that we must let it go and simply do right as well as we can?

This is, at any rate, a clear and decisive issue, and on every side it is being pressed on our attention. A whole literature has been busy at work, challenging the practical effect of belief in the Resurrection upon conduct. It tells us that things here and now are tangible, that this life is sufficient for activity, for pleasure, and for duty, that human sanctions are

sufficient to secure the permanence of morality and justice; and that considerations drawn from another life, the circumstances of which we cannot describe, are barren and superfluous; that they are fruitless questions like the problem whether the stars are inhabited, that no one can settle them decisively, and that we waste time in considering them. 'We have got to do our best to make the world better and happier; why should we waste time in barren speculation? It may be true that there is a Resurrection; if so, so much the better for those who are being good now and doing good now but we shall lose nothing by dropping it out of sight. Those who mean well will mean well still, and have more time to do well when they are less occupied with barren speculation.' Such is the kind of language on the subject with which we are familiar. And beyond this there are those who assert that such considerations are positively mischievous, 'they tend,' it is said, 'to disturb present adjustments by introducing an unknown quantity, they distract attention from issues of the first importance, they tend to change the quality of certain virtues—*e.g.*, they tend to depreciate prudence.' And it must be admitted that there is something very plausible to be said for such contentions. Take a command like "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal; but lay up for yourselves

treasures in heaven"—take it in its nakedness, and it seems to contradict the teachings of political economy. Take a statement like "Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life," quite literally, and it seems to discredit honest work; or take a statement like "Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord," as a working hypothesis, and judges and magistrates become superfluous. How are we going to meet all this which sounds so sensible and is so mischievous?

One consideration on which we must rely is the shortness of life. Is not life relatively too short to escape the bearing of a belief in immortality on man's conduct? If we were habitually to live to the age of Methuselah, if human life were counted by hundreds instead of by tens of years, unquestionably it might be different. I do not think that in the case of any but very exceptional men a belief in immortality would then affect conduct. But for you and me, who know that humanly speaking in ten, twenty, or fifty years we shall be no more here, the case is quite different. Life is too short for many things; it is too short to dispense with the question of its continuance, and with the further question of the bearing of our present way of living on the manner of that continuance. If there are issues of life, they must influence us. If, for instance, what we learn now is the seed of greater possibilities of knowledge,

we must be students; if bad habits will become stereotyped, we must struggle against them. It is the relative shortness of life which causes the belief or non-belief in immortality to affect us so deeply; we feel and know that we are soon to give an account, that things must be carried over after death, and that colours everything—must colour everything.

And really, as a matter of fact, both as an inducement and as a restraint, belief in a future has been one of the most powerful of all operative motives upon mankind. Consciously I allow that often that motive is not present. It is not present always to the Christian worker; he does not say to himself every hour, 'I must do this or keep from that because I shall rise again,' any more than a business man has consciously the motive of poverty or ruin before him to send him to his desk every morning; but unconsciously both the one and the other is ruled by such a motive. And our unconscious motives are often the most powerful. So in the matter of immortality, it is not the "law of a carnal commandment" that governs us, "but the power of an endless life." Often we do not recognise our unconscious motives, but they govern us every day. Every desire here and now for social justice in things that do not concern us; every toleration of the obvious inequalities of life; every brave endurance of slander, is an unconscious appeal to immortality; a testimony to

the fact that man does believe that "though he be dead, yet shall he live." And if it be said that consciousness is an uncertain witness, and that therefore there is no proof, I answer, what constitutes proof? Are there no other roads to certitude, save through syllogism? Are not the most certain of all things, hope and fear and love? Are they not the things upon which we build every day, and yet are they not the things which we cannot prove? "In social things undying hope is the secret of vision." They are the words of a writer who would dissent from many of my positions, yet they are among the truest words ever spoken. And yet what more apparently unreasonable is there than an undying hope as to many of our social affairs? We have begun to learn that there is no such thing as purely intellectual proof, that all reasoning must be moral if it be conclusive. There are—

> Truths that wake to perish never,
> Which neither listlessness nor mad endeavour.
> Nor man nor boy,
> Nor aught that is at enmity with joy,
> Can utterly abolish or destroy.

And one last thing. How the sense of personal immortality dignifies life! How small and petty a thing life seems, if we are really working ourselves out here; if all that can be seen and manifested of lives like those of Havelock, Gordon, Denison, and Pattison, and others, was what was seen here; if the

dreary epitaph 'fuerunt' is the only one that can be written on their tombs. Surely in these things, too, undying hope is the secret of vision—that undying hope of immortality, which has laid hold on the best men, is the surest witness to its truth.

Ah, how large life appears when the great truth of immortality possesses a man! How independent he becomes of temporary pain and passing temptation! He can live in obscurity, though he is conscious that other men, inferior to himself, are filling larger places; he can do his little bit of work in a dull country place, and find it worth while to teach backward and stupid people; he can be patient in the backwaters of life, in routine work, in dreary invalidism, if he waits for "a well done" from Divine lips; if he knows that some day a perfect issue will shew his real work and manifest his secret faithfulness.

## VII.

## THE INFLUENCE OF ABSENCE.

"It is expedient for you that I go away, for if I go not away the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send Him unto you."—ST JOHN xvi. 7.

WITH troubled hearts, and anxious faces, the Eleven sit round their Lord. Question and question rises in their hearts concerning their strange mission; some few get themselves formulated in words, but a thousand other heart cravings will not shape themselves in words at all; they cannot ask all they want. He will tell them all things (so they think) some day when the need arises, they can go to Him at any time and ask: and lo! suddenly this consolation is swept away from them. He, their Lord, their Master, for Whose sake they had parted, not only with the ties of natural affection, but with the popular reading of the religious inheritance of their forefathers—He, their one and only Guide, is going to leave them. Nor is that all; it is better for them (He says) that He should go, for someone else is to take His place—the unseen Paraclete, the Spirit of God, Who can only come when He goes. The conditions of "knowing

Christ after the flesh," the element of sense which is inseparable from contact, are incompatible with a knowledge of, and a fellowship with, the unseen Guide Who was to take His place. "If"—and only if—"I depart I will send Him unto you."

Two thoughts come out of this expediency and this necessity, both hard to realise, and harder still to preserve when realised. We are always, in some way or other, rebelling against them. Every time we say good-bye to anyone we love, there rises something of rebellion within us against the one; while every time we assent to a formula which we have never thought out, we ignore the other. The two thoughts are distinct, yet always, somehow, demanding each other; the one is that absence is more powerful, under certain conditions, than presence—that it is again and again expedient for us that those who influence us by love, by example, or by precept, should go away. The other is that truth only becomes truth to us when it is realised in the spiritual region; that the truest thoughts require certain spiritual media before we can possess them, or they can hold us.

Let us think of these two things this morning. Though they carry us into collision with nearly all our modern idolatries, they are fruitful and inspiring in proportion as we take them in.

I. Absence is better than presence under certain conditions: the influence of the absent is not only

*sometimes* stronger in its degree, it is *always* purer in its kind than the influence exerted by presence. There are times at which we become conscious of the truth enshrined in these words, when we recognise the fact that the influence of absence leaves its spirit. The more we think of the reason why we are here, the more we understand it. We are placed here in order to be tried, proved, tested; and the conditions of our trial are, or seem to be, whether we will do what is right when we are left to ourselves. It is very likely that we shall not do right; it might very easily seem that if some one stood over us continually with a metaphorical birch rod that we should apparently do better than we do now—it often does seem so to some of us. We should not be so self-willed, or so idle, or so vain, or so extravagant, as, perhaps,—alas! we often are. And yet we should not be better, because we should only be acting in the teeth of our desires, through fear of the consequences, through dread of the descent of the birch rod. It is better for us to be left, at any rate sometimes, without any commanding influence, to learn to do without it—better, even if we seem to do worse things, because it is always better to know the worst about yourself; there is more hope when you know, and are not in the terrible bond of self-deceit. If we are to be better, instead of only acting as though we were better in order to keep up appearances, then it

is expedient for us that our best influences should sometimes, and, perhaps, even altogether, leave us. We shall stumble and fall, as the Apostles did when the Lord left them, but let us trust that the inward guidance will win us back at our day of Pentecost, and the stumbling and falling will clear away false growths that might have left us without a foundation to the end.

Often we get glimpses of this truth in our own lives. We get to discount mere sense impressions very easily when we begin to think seriously about the nature of influence. We become conscious that it is not worth that always influences powerfully; there is a quasi-hypnotism that belongs to some natures, there is a kind of magnetic influence for good or evil which is found either in the best or the worst of men. Again, what does influence us positively and powerfully is more often the remembrance of words spoken than the words themselves at the time; true it is that the remembrance does not make us weep, or even tingle, as the words did when we heard them, but they have a stronger power than merely to produce emotion —they move the will. The influence of great personalities certainly is not affected by either absence or death on those who know them, so far as it is an influence on character, and not merely on fears, or on the spirits. We are better when we think, even in their absence, of great, high-

minded men. Napoleon is said to have acknowledged that Christ's influence was greater than his own, because Christ could influence men in absence, while he, himself, found that he could only influence them when actually present; but what he owned to be true of Christ is true, in a less degree, of everyone who has walked in His footsteps, or loved goodness. It is only the quasi-hypnotic influence exerted by natures like Napoleon's which absence removes, and such an influence has little or no effect on character. You and I, when we come to what has really and lastingly influenced us for good, if we are capable of making the investigation, will find ourselves going back to a very few things, and some of them of very slight apparent significance; but the more deeply we interrogate our consciousness, the more I think that we shall find that those things that influenced us have had their real power, and left their deep mark just in proportion as the mere sense impressions, which were their temporary vehicle, have become weakened; that, in very deed and truth, it was expedient for us that those who have most helped us have gone away.

Character is in truth deeper than action; only the good tree can permanently bring forth the good fruit, and character must escape from sense influence if it is to deepen into maturity. Granted that it may not deepen, that it may seem to go

down into the pit — yet the risk must be faced sooner or later. Do not think to make things better by refusing the risk. Gold must be tried by fire, and declared badness is often a more hopeful state through the repulsions to which it gives birth, than the attitude of "letting I dare not wait upon I would." Sense influence has its place; it will do much for us in early life—it must do much; but the greatest thing it does, is not to prevent our falling into the fire, or even running into serious mischiefs, but in leaving the impression behind it of a personality, which, while it won our love, claimed our reverence. And in the deepest things of all at the present, we are moved by the thought of people who have influenced us more than by those people themselves when present—moved more healthfully, more really, less emotionally perhaps, but more really. We may not shed tears, or break into excitable pæans of admiration, but we *act* differently, and we become different, and in that lies the justification of the expediency of their absence.

So it was with the Apostles. What was it that transformed the timid questioners of the last discourses, or the panic-stricken band at the crisis of the Lord's fate into the calm and deliberate body which accepts its responsibilities so cheerfully, and fills up the vacancy in the Apostolic college with a dignity which it would be difficult to exaggerate?

Surely it was the influence of absence. By degrees, in the days of the Resurrection, they were trained to be without that powerful, overshadowing influence under which, for three and a half years, they had lived, and lo! the transformation is wrought. What they never could have become had He stayed with them, they become when He leaves them, a calm, dignified, and collected body, which feels its responsibilities, and sets its hand to the work nearest it, and is ready for the day of Pentecost. In the first chapter of the Acts, even before the day of Pentecost, we read in the conduct of the Apostles the justification of the Master's words, "It is expedient for you that I go away." The influence of that great Personality was not fully felt before in the days of sense influence, but its effect is seen in the subsequent growth of the essential elements of its life and spirit, in the translation into laws of character and action of the principles of His life, and of the ruling features which distinguished it.

If then, as we go through life, we have to part with much that we gratefully own has been to us an inspiration and a joy, if we find ourselves cut adrift from a sheltering home, or a protecting love, or a beautiful example, or a strong influence, let us not forget that there are compensations. It is expedient for us that they go away; for if they go not away, too often we think that a literal

copying of them is the only way of learning the lessons which such lives have to teach us; if they go not away, their spirit cannot come to us. All the most precious and fruitful influence in the world is the influence of that spirit which survives a close association of any kind, and remains as its choicest fruit. There are things in the best influences that are marred by presence; there are obstacles and limitations which contact preserves. Every one of us, who looks back on a great friendship which death has closed, knows how absence has purified it; it has enabled us to see things more truly about our friend; it has enabled us to escape from the often bewildering tyranny of sense impressions; it has enabled us to see how for us, too, it was expedient that he should go away; for if he did not depart, his spirit—his inmost essential influence—could not come to us. It is not always easy to see this—there are moments in which it is impossible—but the moments, when so true a vision is vouchsafed, are among the most precious and serious of our lives. In our own consciousness and experience the departure of the visible friend and the coming of the invisible spirit, is justified.

II. I turn to the other thought—that truth only becomes truth to us when it is realised in the spiritual region. The Apostles thought they knew who Christ was; St Peter answered correctly, "Thou art the Christ," but they uttered a truth which was

not realised in the spiritual region; it was, as we see again and again by the questions they ask Him, it was to them as though He were the Son of God, and as though He were not. Whatever issues and consequences attached to His being what He was could not be seen while He was with them; His Spirit must come into them to teach them those consequences and issues, and His Spirit could not come while His bodily Presence was with them; the two were incompatible; but when His Spirit should come, He would "guide them into all truth." "For no man could say even that Jesus was the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost."

It would not be too much to say that in the realisation of this truth lies the hope of Christendom. Literalism has done its deadly work; it has formulated its syllogisms, and men have thought that mere verbal adhesion to them was all that was necessary. Romanism has formulated in one way, Protestantism in another, Anglicanism in another; and the failure of each and all is apparent at some point. How are we to hope to see the dawn of better things? We answer confidently, and with the highest hope, not by imagining reforms, and working out the details of reconstruction, but by entering into those words, "If I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you," by each endeavouring to arrive at a truer meaning of the spirit and principles of Christ's life, by catching

the secret of His life—self-sacrifice for great and worthy ends. If every Christian set himself to strive after this, Christ's kingdom would come to-morrow. It will never come by mere adherence to doctrines, by being what men call sound in faith—*i.e.*, always ready to utter our partial crudities with consummate assurance. We shall bring it nearer by trying to live on what we believe, by letting it grow into us, and ourselves growing into it; by accepting the standard, the unalterable standard, of the Christian ideal, and by trying to reform our convictions on all subjects in accordance with it. To hold the truth in unrighteousness is an evil not obscurely written in the history of Christian effort, and it has always been considered by too many in every portion of Christendom that the holding the truth was a much greater matter than could be outweighed by the fact of the unrighteousness. This is the πρῶτον ψεῦδος with which everything that is earnest, and not conventional or opportunist, has to contend in every age. Their protest may seem ineffectual, but wherever it is sincere it is the most real contribution that is made to the setting up of the Kingdom. And here, at any rate, the Spirit of Christ has made things clear to us in no obscure fashion. We may have doubts about the matters that divide the Church, but we have no doubt about the fact that the Christian spirit is the spirit that sacrifices self for great ends, and that seeks not its

own. The laws of character and choice, as set forward in the Sermon of the Mount, remain imperishable and immutable, and when once the vision of their meaning has dawned upon us, we can do nothing less than endeavour in some active and real fashion to translate that meaning into actual effort. In these efforts lies the hope of united Christendom. We cannot escape the conviction that in these days Christ has taught these deepest lessons to some who do not care to seem to follow Him. It comes home to us visibly in the highest and best literature of our day. There are many who have His spirit who do not call Him Master. And those of us who dare to hope for a greater future for Christianity than the world has ever yet seen, may well rejoice in any trace of His spirit which is to be found in current literature and thought; that still in another sense it remains true, that if He departs from their vision, He yet sends His Spirit to them. It is another proof of His world-wide mission, of His fellowship with the whole race, and it may be that thus He is teaching us those deep lessons of mutual forbearance, and as St Paul calls it, "rejoicing in others," which Christendom has not yet learnt.

This is our hope, and here lies our duty. For whatever be the issue of the religious confusions of our time, the only lasting contribution which we can

make to their solution is to endeavour to enter into hidden wisdom, the inner teaching of the Spirit of Christ, so that truth may become truth to ourselves; so that we may not merely assent to the truth, or formulate the truth, but that we may know the truth—that truth which alone can "make us free."

## VIII.

## THE PARABLE OF THE SOWER.

"Jesus spake a parable saying, Behold a sower went forth to sow; and when he sowed, some seeds fell by the wayside, and the fowls came and devoured them up: some fell upon stony places, where they had not much earth, and forthwith they sprung up, because they had no deepness of earth; and when the sun was up, they were scorched, and because they had no root, they withered away. And some fell among thorns, and the thorns sprung up and choked them; but others fell into good ground, and brought forth fruit, some an hundredfold, some sixtyfold, some thirtyfold."—ST MATTHEW xiii. 3-8.

THE Parable of the Sower is the first of our Lord's parables. His teaching had reached that particular stage in which it has lost the charm of novelty, the interest which always attends the arising of a new teacher who has anything to say. People were aware of the general features of the new revelation which He had come to make. They had heard His words, they had seen His works; the first excitement had passed off, the novelty was over. And so it became necessary for Him to impress something else upon them, and that was the responsibility of hearing Him at all, the fact that if they heard Him at all, they would have, as we say, something more to answer for. "Take heed how ye hear," that is the great lesson He began

to insist on at this time, and He impressed it most of all by parables such as this.

The Parable of the Sower, summed up shortly, comes to this, that the Divine influence, however powerfully exerted, cannot work apart from man's faithfulness to it. That is a proposition that goes to the root of nine-tenths of the difficulties which men have felt about religion. The Divine influence, powerful as it is, cannot work without man's faithfulness. Therefore, "Take heed how ye hear, for to whomsoever hath shall be given."

The imagery of this parable was suggested by one of the most beautiful scenes in the world. On the edge of the Lake of Gennesareth, the beauty of which travellers have so often described, surrounded by high hills whose sides were covered with vineyards, our Lord sat, as was His custom, in a boat, while the multitude stood on the shore. The undulating cornfields ran down to the water's edge. Through the midst of the field ran a pathway trodden by horse and mule and human foot; hard as a footpath always is, so that no grain could enter into it. On the edge of the field there was the rocky base of the hill, protruding here and there through the cornfield, on which could be seen here and there an ear of corn struggling for life. Scattered up and down the fields there were large bushes of thorn, the *nabeké* (of which traditionally the crown of thorns was composed), springing up in

the very midst of the growing wheat; while overhead there hovered innumerable birds, ready to swoop down and devour any corn that lay exposed on the surface. Beside this there stretched out the deep, loamy, generous soil, on which already golden ears stood thick and strong, giving promise of a return thirtyfold, sixtyfold, and a hundredfold. Such was the picture, and in it, as in a glass, Christ showed to men the story of the reception of the Divine influence, that influence which He came to shed forth. He showed them how God's grace, so beautiful, so strong, when received into the honest and good heart—how God's grace, though it would bring forth as much fruit in the heart of man as the grain that fell into the good ground, might fall to no purpose; how men's hearts might be as hard as that trodden path, how men's hearts might be as shallow as that stony ground, how men might be so worldly, and so ambitious, so luxurious, so preoccupied, that the Divine influence falling all around and upon them might fall, and fall in vain.

It was a beautiful picture, and it seems wonderful that his hearers do not appear to have grasped the great idea that underlay it. It is so much easier for the mass of mankind to grasp ideas conveyed by illustration than abstract ideas. There are many people who go to church every Sunday, and who probably carry away, very often, from the best sermons little or nothing at all, because preachers

for the most part, present their thoughts very much in the shape of abstract ideas. They must present them in that way because there is nothing so wearisome to the educated mind as perpetual, and especially ill-adapted illustration. The preacher cannot have a picture of what he is saying, hanging over the edge of the pulpit, and say, "There, look at that—that is what I mean." If he could it would convey to many minds what no sentences of English could ever convey. There is plenty of room for more illustration, especially in view of the needs of the uneducated, than we see at present in the Church of England. We might well welcome more pictures —and generally more means of teaching through the eye in our churches than there are at present. We who worship here feel the influence of the great artistic genius who devised and planned the works of this church. However uneducated and untaught this generation, for the most part, may be, many of the beautiful things here will speak in eloquent language to a future generation, as even now they speak to some.

We need not then undervalue the power and the necessity of illustration. Educated people may grow weary of illustration, but our Lord was speaking to the multitude, and with the multitude it was absolutely necessary, if they were to understand Him, that they should be able not only to hear things, but to see them. Very few

people are unable to understand pictures and images, such as our Lord presents to us in this parable. And yet in spite of all that, in spite of having the cornfield before their eyes, in spite of them seeing before their eyes how the seed failed in one place and, so to speak, succeeded in another — yet they did not understand; and even the disciples, who might be expected to be more intelligent, had to have the meaning of all this privately expounded to them.

Why was it? That is the question which I am going to ask you to consider to-night. Why was it that they did not understand? Why was it? Partly from their want of spiritual insight. Because the wisdom required to understand Christ was different from ordinary worldly wisdom. Men have felt since that the wisdom of Christ was quite different from any worldly wisdom. It was shown to be different by the way in which Christ treated the natural world. He treated it in a way in which Christians have not always learned to treat it. He treated it as the field of God's working. He said—If you want to see God, look at nature. If you want to see the method of God's work, look at nature. There are, alas, many Christian teachers in these days who would not say anything of the sort, who regard nature as given over to the devil and all his works. The wonder is how they can read

their New Testament, and see the sort of use that Christ made of nature, and still go on believing that the devil rules in the natural world.

Others before Christ had spoken about nature. Solomon spoke of the cedars of Lebanon, and the hyssop springing out of the wall. * But Christ spoke in a different tone, and in a different manner. He spoke, for instance, of the grass. The grass to Him was not the green blades which grow; the grass to Him was the symbol of the transitory nature of things around him. He spoke of the beauty of the Eastern lily, which was splendid beyond all possible imagination to those who are only used to Western lilies. He spoke of it as suggesting the height of human splendour. He spoke of the wind, but the wind to Him was not a mere sound. The wind to Him was the likeness of God's Spirit. He spoke of the reed shaken with the wind—the bulrushes that grow by the ponds, which shake at every breath of wind, with the strange rustle which, once heard, is never forgotten. But he spoke of it not merely as a thing beautiful in itself, but as the type of human instability. He spoke of the vineyard, of the wandering sheep on the mountain, of the living well of water, of the summer rain, of the storm, of the night. When He saw the sun shining on all alike, it told Him of the Father's character—"Who maketh His sun to shine upon the evil

* *Cf.* Stopford Brooke's "Sermon on the Sensibility of Christ."

and the good." There was in Christ an intense sensibility to the teaching of nature. He saw as much in the flower or the sunset as another man reads in a book. When the corn of wheat fell into the ground and died it meant for Him not a mere natural phenomenon, but life through death. He spoke of the harvest and the many lessons conveyed by the corn—first the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear. It was to Him a rebuke to man's impatience.

So the diverse fate of the seed when sown was to Him the symbol of the varying reception of the Divine influence; sometimes cast upon the stony pathway, sometimes cast amid thorns, sometimes only the food of the hovering fowls—the evil companions who snatch out of the heart, as it were, the good impulses which God puts there—and sometimes, too, sown in the good and honest heart.

He spoke as seeing the truths of the Spirit in the natural world. Elsewhere He gives the reason of His speaking in this fashion. He tells us that spiritual truth can only be apprehended by the spiritual eye. "If thine eye be single, thy whole body is full of light; but if thine eye be evil, thy whole body is full of darkness." That is to say, moral vision sees moral effect. The means of communication between man and that moral and spiritual world which underlies nature is through the conscience. "If thine eye be single, if thy

conscience be clean and clear, then you will see in nature what God means to teach, — you will see God in nature."

Herein lies the real solution of the difficulty which men make about the opposition, or the apparent opposition, between science and religion. God is in the natural world just as much as God is in the Bible. It is as certain that God is in the rising sun, and in the noonday sun, and in the setting sun, and in the grass of the field, and in the flowers, and in all that is beautiful in the natural world, as that God is speaking to us through the Bible. The perception of immanence of God in nature is the real corrective of apparent antagonism of science to faith.

The misery and the wretchedness of it, however, remains, that we can dull this perception, we can blunt this sense, if we choose. We may see nothing where there is everything to be seen, and yet we may have very good bodily eyes. We may be able even to criticise works of art, and yet we may be unable to see anything of moral goodness as it really is. That is what our Lord impresses on us. We may be able to see in the natural world, with all the natural world's beauty, nothing at all but what we call the operations of nature; we may gain no sight of God at all behind the things which are splendid and beautiful in the natural world. There is a moral element in every question; and the man who cannot see God in this life, either

in nature or in revelation, has always this question before him, whether he has made himself such a man that he cannot see God in nature or in the Bible. Sometimes people demand of us as a kind of condition of their believing that we should answer all their difficulties about religion. That there are difficulties no one will deny, but there is a question to be settled before they can be dealt with—viz., the sort of way in which a man approaches them. A man may blind his moral sight, and then the difficulty is not on the side of Christ and His teaching. If a man has blurred his power of spiritual perception, if he has allowed his heart to become as the pathway across the field on which the horses and mules tramp, or if he has let his heart be so preoccupied by his business, or by his worldly concerns, that it is as impossible for anything to grow in it as in the rocky soil on the edge of the field, or if he is such a poor weak creature that directly any one else says anything to him against religion, he will immediately turn right round and give up all that he has believed in hitherto—then the difficulty is not on Christ's side. It is only the man who "wills to do God's will" who shall "know," now and hereafter, "of the doctrine, whether it be of God."

Let us then 'take heed how we hear.' When truth comes to us in any active form, let us be sure that we are the sort of people that are able to hear

it. Let us take heed that we have not loved our money so much that we have made our hearts as hard as the pathway across the field. Let us be sure that we have not given way to lust or temper, or any of those things that make a man's moral nature shallow like the rocky ground on the edge of the field. Let us take heed that we go not with bad companions who snatch God's influence out of our hearts and leave us as barren and cynical and miserable as they really are themselves. Let us take care that we have not given way to the temptations to hardness; the temptations to shallowness; the temptations to weakness that are always hovering around. Let us strive to preserve within ourselves that honest and good heart, that heart which looks straight at every duty, and tries to do it; that good heart which sees good even where other people do not see it, because it is so good itself. Let us try to cultivate within ourselves that honest and good heart; and then, depend upon it, whenever the Divine influence comes to us, it will find its lodgment in us. It may come from sermons; or from the Bible; or through beautiful music; or through the loveliness of external nature; or it may come through none of these, but come in some way, and come at some time most assuredly it will; and if there is in us, then, that honest and good heart, depend upon it, it will never come in vain. It will bring forth fruit, some thirty, some sixty, and some an hundredfold.

## IX.

## THE LIGHT THAT IS NOT DARKNESS.

"Take heed, therefore, that the light which is in thee be not darkness."—St Luke xi. 35.

There are no warnings more worthy of our best attention than those which remind us of our responsibilities for that which comes to us with the signs and claims of truth. They abound in Christ's teaching; they meet us in sayings about eyes that do not see and ears that do not hear in the repeated exhortation, "he that hath ears to hear, let him hear," in the solemn statement of the condemnation that comes upon the world through the dawning light. It is not only that we are responsible for acting on our beliefs—that, for the most part, men see and acknowledge quite plainly—it is that we are responsible for their formation and for their hold upon our mind; it is that we have to answer for thinking as we think, as well as for doing as we do; it is that to cultivate mental self-control and a just habit of forming conclusions is as much a moral necessity as to refrain from drunkenness, or from any other form of excess; it is that prejudice

and wilful ignorance are in reality self-murder. Belief for each one of us is a personal matter—we say it and say it rightly when we want to claim our liberty to differ from others, but the statement reaches much further than this. Belief has to become a personal conviction for each one of us, resting on evidence of its own, on evidence which seems to us conclusive; otherwise the most true things, even the thought of God's existence, may become false to us. Faith is not even holding true convictions about God in Christ, it is holding true convictions in a certain way for certain reasons. It is holding them as the result both of a patient and faithful use of the light which we have, and of trying to live upon what comes to us. A writer of the ancient Church puts it thus, that "while human beings must be known in order to be loved, Divine things must be loved in order to be known." We do not really know anything about the subject-matter of religion until we care about it; and there is no way of learning to love religious truths other than by patient study, and thorough faithfulness to what we know. Men may go through much for merely traditional beliefs; they may argue and dispute and quarrel, they may make friendships and break them, they may go through great labours, and sufferings for them even though they do not love them at all, or let them enter into their lives. But one thing such beliefs never can do, they never feed a man, they never

nourish his spiritual nature, they never build him up in holiness and grace. If they are to do that, he must make them his own by personal conviction, he must love them, and learn to live upon them. There have been men who would die to uphold the creed in which they were born (perhaps we have known such), but about whom we cannot help feeling that pride and obstinacy have been their chief motives; that their religion never became part of them. There is no greater test of one's own faithfulness than can be furnished by the questions, Do I love my creed? and can my creed be turned into action? All merely theoretical views crumble away; nothing remains except that which has worked its way into our own life, that which we have thought out and dwelt upon till it has issued in some practical duty upon which we can lay our finger. Practical obedience is the depth of earth which catches the sower's seed, the Divine inspiration, and saves it from misleading influences, from the fowls of the air, from the scorching sun, from the attack of ridicule and misrepresentation.

Nor is it only for ourselves that we need to beware lest the light within us be darkness. We have to make up our minds about things outside ourselves; we have to judge, to throw our influence on one side or the other in public questions, and there again, we must take heed lest the light within us be not darkness. In a time of strongly conflicting ideas and

airs, when almost everyone takes sides, there are obvious and special difficulties about wise and faithful thinking on religious questions. It is easy to take a side and insist strongly on what looks like the religious view of a question, but it needs patient thoughtfulness to discover the real inward religiousness of any question. In approaching every great question we must remember that there are two sides; that on the one hand there are the claims of truth as it seems to us; and that on the other, there are the claims of justice on behalf of those who think differently. We have to reconcile these, and it is often very difficult, because the issues are so confused, that we can hardly see to which side our real allegiance is due, for the apparently Christian side may not always be the real one.

It needs patient thoughtfulness to penetrate beneath catch-words, to see through hasty generalisations, to discover what is the highest and best course attainable, and after that, it often needs courage to throw our influence on the right side.

There is one question before the Church now that needs our special attention—the question of the desirability of teaching definitely Christian doctrine in the Board Schools. It is attracting much attention and creating much division at the present time. The problem itself is by no means an easy one, and now that it has been so definitely raised, the time seems to have come for facing it, and for trying to

get at some solution of the difficulty. We who believe, as most of us do, that it is desirable to train up children in Christian belief and practice, are bound not only to have a vague general opinion on the subject—*e.g.*, that it is a good thing that they should be taught and that it must be done, but to have some apprehension of the real inwardness of the question, and some intelligent theory as to how the difficulties may be met. It is easy enough to have a strong opinion on one side or the other, but it is much less easy to find a solution of the difficulties that beset any attempt to carry out any system of teaching, about which men will not be continually raising questions which, in such a connection, are most undesirable and most injurious to religion. The problem seems simple enough till you begin to see how great the difficulties are which beset any attempt on the part of a non-religious body to teach religion of any kind. I do not attempt to dispose of those difficulties, but only to offer some considerations which may be suggestive of solutions.

Let us look at the position broadly. On the one hand it is urged with great force that we must teach those Christian doctrines which all denominations are agreed in holding, that the authority of the Board ought to be set in motion in order to bring it to pass that all its teachers shall give instruction in them. On the other hand, a difficulty is immediately raised about the teaching of distinctive

doctrines, that they cannot be taught by those who do not believe in them, and that under existing circumstances there is no security that those who are called upon to teach do believe them, and that if under such circumstances they do teach them, they may put a colouring of their own upon them which may produce a result which would be highly unsatisfactory, if not hurtful, to the minds of young children. Therefore, it is argued that it is wise only to insist on the moral teaching of the Bible—the general results of Christianity on life.

What is one to say? The easiest thing is to take the simplest course, and, according to temperament either to say 'teach everything,' and so to ignore all difficulties, or to attempt to avoid the whole difficulty by simply teaching Christian morality. Is it not possible to go deeper? On one hand this is clear that hazy indefiniteness does not help us out of the difficulty, for if we are to teach children about Christ, we must teach them in a definite fashion. The notion that it is unfair to prejudice their minds at the start—that to teach them what you hold to be the truth is to steal a march upon them—that they must pick up their convictions in the progress of years—is no doubt very attractive to some minds, but it will not stand the test of experiment. You might as well refuse to feed a child gratuitously during its earliest years, on the ground that some day it will have to earn its own

living. You feed him as a child, that you may bring him on and make him ready to feed himself. So you teach him religious truth, that he may by-and-bye search into it for himself, and receive conviction of that which is true. The channel, through which truth enters the child's nature, is obedient trust. You use deliberately his faculty of trust in your authority; but you use it, knowing that the time will come when the child must examine the grounds of what it is taught, when it can no longer be kept under the power of traditional ideas. To teach children of the Incarnation, the Resurrection of Christ, the doctrine of the Trinity, and of the life to come, is to teach that which has the warrant of ages behind it, but it is to teach them that of which they cannot be convinced as yet. A child must receive such teaching as seeds, which will grow with the growth of its nature, or it will not receive them to any good result at all. If they are taught in this fashion, they need not be taught less plainly, but they will be taught in a fashion suitable to a child's nature; the truths will be put before them not as they are apprehended by a man, but as they can be apprehended by a child. And therein arises the difficulty. To teach anything at all you must know a good deal more about the subject than you can teach, and to teach religious truth you must know it not only intellectually but practically. No one can teach religious truths in that way except

the man who believes them and loves them, and tries to act on them himself. The only religious teaching therefore that remains and sticks is the teaching that is backed by a religious influence.

Now you cannot secure a religious influence; the requirements of the system of elementary education do not extend to it, nor could they. And, therefore, to insist boldly and nakedly that certain doctrines shall be taught, and to enforce this, is not to ensure the result you wish for, or indeed, to ensure any result which you would wish for. So that, though it looks simple enough to say briefly that these doctrines shall be taught, a difficulty arises at once in insisting on it. Many of us in our school days must have experienced the weariness and the boredom of submitting to teaching on religious questions which we felt was not religious. This must happen when men who are chosen to teach for other reasons become teachers of religion as a matter of necessity. They may—they often do—teach it most helpfully, but you cannot ensure that they will. It would be terrible for us to engage some one to teach our own children the doctrine of the Incarnation, knowing that he did not believe in it; but is it not just the same case? Therefore mere insistance on the teaching of Christian doctrines will not meet the difficulty, it may only enhance it, for the truths of Christianity can only be fruitfully taught by those who believe in them. No one who has not penetrated inside

them and become convinced of them can teach them in the manner in which a child will apprehend them.

Here, then, is the difficulty, and it is one which demands our serious consideration. Nothing could be worse than the attempt to introduce religious tests into the teaching profession as a condition of advancement or selection; nothing could be more perilous. Even if all denominations were to agree on some syllabus of religious teaching which would give to no denomination the advantage, this difficulty must remain, and it has no possible solution save two: one is that public education should be purely secular, which would be repugnant to the feelings of the great mass of English people (though, if every parent did his or her duty, it ought not to be so), and the other is that the work of religious teaching should be undertaken by the denominations, each parent stating to which denomination it would entrust its children. No doubt this would again involve great difficulty; but if the present system be discarded as unsatisfactory, no other solution would seem to be possible. At any rate, this one thing seems to be certain, that to adopt the view that you will receive definite Christian teaching by insisting on certain doctrines being taught, is to ensure certain failure and to dishonour Christian truth. For the Christian religion is not a series of intellectual propositions that can be poured into the

mind like the propositions of Euclid; it is not even a set of principles; the Christian religion is a life, and a life which can only be really taught by the strong influence of another life as a medium of communication. A hesitater, a doubter, a disbeliever stops the magnetism; it cannot flow through him. Only out of certainty comes power; only out of the faith which is insight comes religious influence. The dogmatists all round us, who treat God's truth as though it were something enclosed in capsules and administered in doses, who are insisting that if you can only get definite teaching you must have results, have never risen themselves to the most elementary understanding of what Christian faith is.

One might say much more, but I have said enough to indicate the real nature of difficulties which can so easily be ignored. The problem is a very difficult one indeed, and there is no short and easy method of solution such as occurs to the shallow ecclesiastical dogmatist. Denominationalism is a solution, secular education is a solution; each have difficulties and objections of their own to contend with, but the religious difficulty has become acute, and some better way will have to be found than the one which is, strangely enough, put before us as the Christian way—viz., that we should insist that teachers shall teach truth which they may intellectually reject, and of the practical outcome of which they may be ignorant. To tell a man that

he must teach the Atonement if he does not believe in it, or thinks that he does not, or if he rejects some caricature of it with which he is familiar, is to ensure a terrible result. The more definite the teaching the better, if it be the outcome of religious conviction; the more definite the teaching, the more dangerous and deadly, if it be the mere repetition of catch-words.

We must recognise that truth grows as we grow; that our relations to God's revelation are progressive; that God's revelation to us is in itself progressive; that we see it continually from a higher standpoint. The soul of man needs truth to help it to grow, and as it grows, truth grows within it. There is no finality now or ever. Take, for instance, our first apprehension of the doctrine of the Trinity; it may be the baldest tritheism, but if we feed upon it, and let it feed us, it will grow into the highest possible sense of the Nature and Being of the One God. Our first view of the Atonement may be dry, barren, and unspiritual, but when once the truth of progress by sacrifice dawns upon us, our conception will lose all its hardness, and grow by degrees into a life of sacrifice, which itself "dies daily."

Thus Divine truths are capable of ever-growing application to ever-growing lives; for the end and object of all truth is the shaping of character to its final perfection. We may begin with theory, we may believe for a time that we believe, because we

can utter our belief in accurate sentences, but we shall surely find that to believe truth is not to argue about it or to demonstrate it, but to live upon it, and that when we live upon it, it grows within us. In other words, all belief is practical.

Take this very doctrine of Christ's Resurrection that is before us now; it is possible to accept it and teach it and to look at it in two ways; it is possible to try to demonstrate it, to argue, to reason about it, and to end after all with a dreary inward sense, that though it may be true, it is not true for us; and it is possible to live on it, and to let it work within us as St Paul exhorts us, to make it the starting-point not the goal, because Christ rose, to "seek those things which are above"; to see in it the warrant for that struggle upwards which our own nature continually holds before us as the better way; to recognise it as the perpetual incentive to overcoming the lower in our daily life, to taking the higher line. In that way the truth of the Resurrection grows within us; it is no longer a mere dogma—it is the mainspring of all our active life. Its influence is as steadying as it is inspiring, it keeps us cool in success and brave in failure, it nerves us to renewed struggle, it preserves us from despair, it shews us now through the beauty of the spring its own endless possibilities—the freshness that ever issues from the withered stump; it gives us a right sense of proportion about the value of this life, how that it is great, but only great as a

means of preparation; and then time, money, personal gifts, and advancement, all fall into their right places; we shake ourselves freer from the bondage of circumstances; we understand the saying, "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

If Christian doctrines had been taught and accepted in that fashion instead of in a hard, dry, and unsympathetic way, we should be relieved from many of our present difficulties on the subject of dogmatic education. It is the tendency to insist on the mechanism of phrases and to forget the life-giving power of ideas which has created most of the misconceptions that divide Christendom. And perhaps the best, the most real, endeavour we can make towards overcoming the difficulties which (to our shame) attend the teaching of Christian religion, is to resolve that Christ's truth shall be for us, not a subject of argument nor an occasion of dispute, but the most precious of all possessions, and that growing within us as we grow, it shall form within us the Christ life and the Christ character—the Christ life which counts service its highest privilege, and the Christ character which ever increases "in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and Man."

## X.

## THE CURSE OF INDIFFERENCE.

"Curse ye, Meroz, saith the angel of the Lord, curse ye bitterly the inhabitants thereof; because they came not to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty."—JUDGES v. 23.

"Whosoever shall seek to save his life shall lose it."—ST LUKE xvii. 33.

ISRAEL had had a hard battle. The tribes had come up manfully and done their duty; they had suffered, and through their sufferings they had won. The battle had been hard, the struggle had been severe; the issue had been doubtful for a time, but at the end victory over a cruel oppressor lay with God's army. They exult in the first moments of triumph. They are free! Their feelings find vent in a shout of triumph and a pæan of thanksgiving. Amid it there comes a saddening recollection which gives birth to a strain of fierce indignation. One town or village, Meroz, had hung back. Hidden away in some valley, it had heard the cry that summoned every patriot to the defence of Israel; but it knew that the battle would never come near itself, and it thought that it could look on from behind its hills safe and unharmed; and so it said, "Let others do

the fighting, we need not concern ourselves"; and it stayed at home and did nothing. Yes, it did something, it gave birth to a feeling of bitter indignation—the indignation which is born of a sense of desertion, of betrayal at a crisis on which everything hangs.

Meroz has passed away; its very site, I believe, is unknown. The only record of it that remains is this one bitter verse. It has gone to the doom of such as seek to save their life and thereby lose it. But the feeling which it evoked remains—the feeling of anger and contempt for those who, in the midst of righteous struggles, only think of keeping their own skins unharmed and their own pockets untouched. Meroz stands for the shirker in the Church or in the world. The Meroz disposition is in you and me when we stand aside in any struggle for righteousness, and mutter in our safe hiding-places, in our comfortable drawing-rooms, "It is no concern of mine." Meroz stands for the man who wishes to be in when the victory is won, but who will not share the trouble and the agony, the tears and the blood of the battle. It sits on through the critical and dreadful day, thinking only of its own reputation which might suffer, or of its balance at the bankers; but it does nothing, nothing to promote God's government in the world, nothing to defeat the enemies of His people. And it raises still an anger and contempt, and a loathing which, though

it may not express itself in the poetic frenzy of Deborah, is just as real as that which animated her outburst.

The Meroz disposition in men and in communities is always with us. There is always a struggle going on against wickedness, and against those conditions of life which make wickedness so easy for so many around us. There is the same struggle of God's people against oppressions that was waged by Israel against Sisera. That struggle never ceases; it changes its outward form, but its essence remains; it dies out here only to emerge there; it seems to flag, but it never stops; it is the "warfare in which there is no discharge." Israel fights on the side of the poor and helpless against the sweating contractor and the grinding landlord in our great cities to-day; Israel fights in the struggle of all that is good against the enemies of God; Israel fights to-day against sin and sorrow, against error, against crime, against want, against starvation; Israel fights—and Meroz stays at home!

And the saddest thing is that this Meroz disposition is so widely spread. So few people are there who can be found to take any interest in the struggle that is being waged around them; so few have any will to work for God and goodness; so many stand aside and wish it well, and wish other people to do good, but will not give themselves any trouble at all to do anything to help right causes. It is so in

the direct agencies of the Church, in the quiet, unperceived ways in which men and women can work for the spiritual good of others—the ways in which they can do really useful work, and gain a real influence for good upon the lives of others. How few are there who care for that quiet sort of work—I mean comparatively how few.* There are people—plenty of people—who will work themselves into a state of white heat about religious education, but they will not teach in the Sunday schools. There are people who will attend meetings where they will be inflamed by some theological firebrand, and cheer him to the echo, but they will not themselves touch one of the burdens of their neighbours. They will not become managers on Board Schools, and show by their presence and sympathy that they regard contact with little children as a blessed thing. They sit like Meroz in their snug drawing-rooms, and lament the sad fate of the children of London, but they do nothing to come in contact with them themselves. They will criticise the best friends of those children, but they will do nothing themselves except perhaps vote for those who care for nothing but to keep down the rates.

So again they will criticise the conduct of Boards of Guardians, but they will not interest themselves in those vast problems of Poor-law relief which weigh so much on the minds of thoughtful men at the present time by joining any relief committees.

* Preached during the School Board Election in 1894.

Is it not over and over again true that the Meroz disposition is only too common? How small is the number of persons who will interest themselves in any work that requires a public spirit; for instance, in any municipal election on which so much depends! When some theological conviction or some political question is to the front they will throw themselves into it; but when it comes to a matter of the real, quiet, Christ-like work that is being done by some of our neighbours on County Councils, Boards of Guardians, and other bodies, how very few will give their sympathy and help to it! It was not so in the early Church. If you read the Acts of the Apostles, you will see the first care of the Church, after providing spiritual instruction, was to provide for the temporal needs of its widows, and, to do so effectually, to choose out seven men who were "full of the Holy Ghost." That sounds, no doubt, a somewhat strange qualification for a modern Board of Guardians, that they should be men 'full of the Holy Ghost,' but unquestionably there is just as much need now that they should be such, as there was in the early Church. But this is just the work from which most religious people keep away. If there is a reform to be urged, if there is an abuse to be corrected, if there is an oppressed class, whose rights must be asserted for them because they cannot assert them for themselves; if there is a palpable wrong done every day in our

streets, most of you know how few religious people, apart from any private interests in the matter, are looked to as likely to take any action for the public good. Religious people discredit, as a matter of fact, by their inaction the whole conception of religion in the popular mind. The religious man, the Christ-like man, ought to care about everything which has to do with the life and welfare of his fellows; he ought to care because his only standing as a Christian, his binding condition of membership, is that "we are members one of another." But to how few Christians does the religious character present itself in the inspiring aspect of working in some way for God, or for the good of man! How few get beyond what Charles Kingsley calls the miserable conception of "saving their own wretched souls!" Now, no doubt self-devotion shows itself in a variety of forms. It would be ridiculous and unjust to confine working for God to helping the direct agencies of the Church or to sitting on public bodies; but making all broad allowances, how few religious people in London show that they care for the spiritual or bodily well-being of their fellow-citizens—care, for instance, that they shall have clean water, care that they shall have decent dwellings, care that they shall have proper hours of work or opportunities of healthy recreation! How many are contented to let the interests of their fellow-creatures take care of themselves! It is this Meroz

spirit which is the curse of our own day, the curse of shirking, the curse of indifference; and if I could to-day make any of you feel what opportunities you throw away, and inspire you with a noble desire to fight against some of the enemies of God around you—drink or dirt or ignorance—I should be more than thankful.

Let us remember and lay to heart that Meroz was cursed for simply doing nothing. There is no hint that she helped the enemy; she simply did nothing. She kept out of the way and let others do the work. She thought to save her own soul and lost it. We are all alive enough to the peril of wrong-doing; but there is the other peril of not doing anything at all, of simple inaction. It is hard to get many people to feel that often the worst kind of injury and danger lies in doing nothing. From what does this deadly inaction arise? Why, from a lack of vigour in men's whole perception of life, from slackness, from a low state of moral and spiritual vitality. What can revive it? Nothing but the sense of a real Christ in our midst. The Incarnation must not be a mere dogma to be hurled at the head of theological opponents, but must bring to us the vision of the living Christ, of Christ within us here and now. "He that hath the Son hath life." There is only one true way of getting this vision. If a man really belives in Christ, not as a mere figure of speech to describe one who lived

and died long ago, nor as a mere theological dogma and nothing else, but really believes in Christ, that is, that Christ lives—the one way that he will prove the reality of that belief is by sharing in some way His care for the brethren. If a man really believes in Christ, Who said, "I am among you as he that serveth," if he takes Christ's life as the pattern and model of his own, if he really believes that Christ's life, when he tries to do any good work, flows through him, and influences others in a thousand ways of which he knows nothing at all, he then comes to feel responsible for the woes around him, he does his best, feeling that God's tasks have become his tasks. When he is called upon to take an interest in other lives, he is ready even at some personal sacrifice to do so. He is a shareholder (let us say) in a company, and when he hears of big dividends paid by companies as the result of working their employés for sixteen hours a day, he does not say, "It is no concern of mine," and pocket the dividend, but, being a shareholder, he goes to the meeting and makes his voice heard in protest, in trying to get them to treat the people they employ a little better. I saw the other day in the paper that there was a Company paying forty-five per cent., and doing extremely little for those whom it employed, and when one shareholder ventured at the annual meeting to suggest that they should do a little more for them—so strong is the passion for

money in people—that another was not ashamed to rise and move that he be no longer heard! And the motion was carried. Such is the moral degradation that permeates companies that make forty-five per cent. and give starvation wages to their employés! What these shareholders really do is to make the conditions of life for the people, and especially for the women in London who work for them, as miserable as they are, in order that they may receive forty-five per cent. Or, again, when the believer in Christ hears that any houses in his neighbourhood are in an insanitary condition, when he finds that disease is rife through people being in houses unfit for human habitation, he does not say "It is no concern of mine," but he worries the sanitary authorities till the thing is mended. He says, "God sent His only begotten Son into the world that we might live through Him," 'and as I live through Him I must make life possible for others as far as I can.' Wherever there is good work to be done, he is ready to help.

And this subject of the homes of the poor needs special attention. Directly it was announced that I was to preach on the duties of citizens to-day, the Secretary of the Mansion House Committee on Homes of the Poor wrote to me and asked me especially to bring this subject before you, and to ask if there are any persons here who would serve on their local committees for attaining this great

object. We could not help anything better, and it is a work which would be in some of us a very fitting act of reparation, for we are living in houses which have been built, so to speak, on the ruins of the homes of the poor in this part of London.

There is a new opportunity of public usefulness now coming before us in the change that is in progress in the constitution of Vestries and Boards of Guardians. The cry goes up from all round—Make it a little more possible for us to live decently. Make it a little more possible for us to bring up our children in healthy surroundings. It is of no use to reply, as people so often do, "Circumstances won't do it all." Of course they won't; but let better circumstances do what they can to help these people. Apathy is in these matters our greatest peril. There are so few people who have any sense of public obligation, there is so little feeling of responsibility for things around us, and the result is that the care of public matters in London is left very often to the least capable members of the community — the men whose one consuming desire appears to be to project their own personalities and to listen to the sound of their own voices. I do not say that we can all serve on public bodies, but that we all ought to take interest in those questions; if we did, the public bodies would do far better work than they often do at present; for they must reflect that interest to a very large extent.

Why is it that so many people are contented to be useless? How is it that so many people are content to come to London and to live in London in a state of unconcern about their surroundings, such as they certainly do not show in the country? *There* they are very much alive to things about them, but when they come to London they seem, as it were, to lose their sense of fellowship with others in this great wilderness of brick and mortar, to be unable to find any duty with regard to the masses around them. Very often inaction comes from laziness, from mere indolence, from a belief that somehow or other things will get themselves done. But things do not get themselves done in London; they go from bad to worse every year; and all the while there is such a wealth of unused power around us. A man is born in luxury, and he comes to middle age with the habits of his life upon him. He belongs to what is called society in London, over which narrow circle there hovers a kind of vague air of privilege, while in the minds of those who belong to it, there is a vague sense that activity or energy in city life is not to be expected of them. To it many of you belong; nothing is expected of you, and you do nothing. A well-bred, easy-going selfishness fills up your life. Duty to your fellow-citizens, duty in interesting yourselves in the homes of the poor, or anything else—it seems as if you had never heard of it, and when such an idea is brought to your notice you

look at it, through a metaphorical eyeglass, as if it were some strange beast that had found its way, no one knew how, into your house. 'Duty to our fellow-citizens! Why, we pay our rates, and heavy enough they are; but as to seeing how they are spent, that belongs to those sort of people who care to sit on public bodies.'

Now, is there any hope for this kind of man, who is often capable enough, save through his coming to understand that God did not make him to live such a life? If we could only convince such a man that we are put here because God wants us to be here in the city of London, just in the same way as an engineer puts a bolt or a shaft in the exact place that he wants it; that his good breeding and pleasant manners, and quick perception, and common-sense are not mere trifling accidents, but were meant to make the lives of others better and happier! Let such a man wake up to the fact that living even in this or that place is no accident, that God is opening out before him in His own ways the duties he is to perform—let him realise this and he cannot remain useless. Let him realise that he is God's child, let him get hold of the idea that he is in some way God's minister to those round about him, and he will find a way by which to dedicate his life to God's service. Let him once see quite clearly that the love of the Father is flowing into him in order that he may do something for the good of his fellow-men,

and the only anxiety he will have will be to find out what that thing is, and to do it with all his heart.

Ah, and there is no curse then. When the idle, cowardly, selfish, human being comes to himself, and recognises the God within him, the Divine self beneath all this material incrustation — when he resolves to be distinctly on God's side, however little he can do, when he puts forth his hand to undo oppression, and his neck to bear burdens, there is no curse then!

"Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord! Blessed is he that cometh to the help of the Lord against the mighty!" Blessed is he that followeth, however humbly, the footsteps of the great Leader, of the great Lover of mankind, of the great Reformer, of the great Captain of our salvation, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ!

## XI.

# JOSEPH.

"But he had sent a man before them, even Joseph, who was sold to be a bondservant: whose feet they hurt in the stocks: the iron entered into his soul: until the time came that his cause was known: the word of the Lord tried him."—PSALM cv. 17, 18, 19.

JOSEPH was in early life a favourite, and a favourite, too, who does not predispose us in his favour. His dreams, in which he was always the central figure, were too much even for his fond father. He could not help dreaming, but the telling of them is a sign of that youthful vanity which is always a trial to those who are brought in contact with it. Joseph evidently alienated his brethren; his coat of many colours was only the culmination of his father's marks of favour, and their brutal and unnatural conduct towards him can be accounted for, though it can in no way be justified. They were not disposed to join in the family worship of this "dreamer," as they call him. And yet in the end, after long years, Joseph won all their hearts and left behind him, in a far wider circle, the memory of a great and good life and a just government. How did this come to pass? What were the circumstances

that led to the evolution of the Joseph, the Prime Minister of Egypt, from Joseph the dreamer?

I. Every man's life has two sides; its outward circumstances and its inner history. Joseph's outward life was full of troubles, but its record remains as a perpetual proof of the possibility of even a spoilt and petted child being able to meet and conquer adverse circumstances. Severed from his home, sold into slavery, cast into prison on an unjust charge, just when he seemed to have made a fresh start in life, adversity seemed to have marked the 'favourite' as her own. "The word of the Lord tried him." His integrity in carrying an evil report of his brothers to his father was the occasion of his slavery; his purity was the cause of his imprisonment. But, "the word of the Lord tried him." God put him to the proof, and though his sorrows were hard to bear, there was this compensation, that in his troubles there was no misery of self-reproach, they were, as we say, utterly undeserved.

That Eternal Love which orders our lives does not regard present happiness as the primary essential; it gives to it only a very subordinate place; it does not hesitate to secure spiritual strength at the sacrifice of apparent well-being, but "the iron enters into the soul" of the just and the good in quite another way from that in which it pierces the heart and poisons the inward peace

of the wicked. Joseph's troubles did not sour him; they were indeed fitting him for a high position. "The word of the Lord tried him," and proved his capacity. It is so with many of the most noble characters. In early life nobility is obscured by a tendency to self-advertisement, but in later life, adversity has purged away the dross and left the gold. Let us be patient with and hopeful about conceited young men. There may be and often is something very noble underneath all the outward flash — something which may only need the purification of trial. So it was with Joseph; sorrow was indispensable for his development, so sorrow came. He, like all who would be of use to others, must be "baptised into a death," he must know the bitterness of sorrow, he must learn in lonely desolation what life is, before he can rise to being what God meant him to be. Undeserved suffering was the first element in Joseph's development. It is given to some of us at times in our lives to enter into his experience. God's love does not provide merely for our enjoyment, its aim is our perfection. There is but one wisdom when undeserved sorrow comes—viz., to see in it the temporary means that are essential for our highest well-being. Thus is God dealing lovingly with us that we may be more useful to others. Every trial is not punishment, God forbid that we should think so; every trial—the trial of a sorrow

at home, or of ill-health, or of sudden mishap which condemns us to inactivity, is working towards an issue; and with us, as with Joseph, the prison of an uncongenial home or of an enforced inactivity may be, if we will, the seed of a life of noble usefulness.

The inward growths of temper want pruning, and motive requires elevation. When shall we have faith to look at their ultimate issue rather than to lose all their power within us by useless repining?

II. Besides this, Joseph had to bear undeserved shame. He had no reason like David to cover his head, but he was subjected to one of those stains of the character which so often change the milk of human kindness into gall, and which are a real torture to a sensitive soul. Nothing is so hard to bear up against as undeserved suspicion of that sort. It chills the heart, it freezes the kindly impulse, it breeds doubts even of those nearest to us. Those feeders on carrion who are ready to believe every scandal on little or no evidence do without doubt depress and hinder their victims; there is no more tragic spectacle than a sensitive soul writhing under false accusation. Nothing was so hard for Joseph to bear as the knowledge that Pharaoh, to whom he had been so loyal, distrusted him. And yet it left him unsoured; there is not a trace of bitterness in his soul; he is generous in the allowances he makes

for his brethren when he meets them again, he is evidently the sunshine of the prison, he rallies his fellow-prisoners on their depression — "Sirs, why look ye so sadly to-day?" Why was it? Because all this undeserved suspicion did its real work within him; it taught him to think better of people than appearances might justify; it showed him how easy it is to misunderstand and to misconceive others, and taught him to look at things all round. Was it not excusable if Potiphar distrusted him when his guilt seemed so indisputably established? Was not even the chief butler's forgetfulness intelligible when he called to mind the danger from which he had escaped and the multiplied duties of his office? Was it not hard for them all to know the truth and to think of him rightly? Brethren, men who believe bad things of us may be ignorant, hasty, and imperfect, but they are not necessarily utterly depraved. We have to learn to forgive even our friends if they fail us. There is One and only One whose Love is as a rock, Who will never fail. It is a fearful reality—that solitude of life which such experiences force on us; but it has another side, it is not without a certain strength and grandeur; that life is deepest and truest, will bear the burdens of others best and will feel most for them, that has itself been alone in its desolation and misery.

Joseph was tried by distrust, but when the time came "that his cause was known," in the day of his triumph when the king made him "ruler over all his house," the experience, which was gained through this distrust and through the sense of his aloneness with God which had come to him in the prison, made him so effective a ruler, gave him the power "that he might inform his princes after his will, and teach his senators wisdom."

After all there are worse things for a man than to go through a period of undeserved suspicion; it makes him more careful and restrained in his own judgments about others; he learns how hard it is to reach the truth, how hard to sift a slander, and he becomes more restrained in the process of forming his own judgments and more chary in expressing them.

Nor was Joseph's life without its compensation, even outwardly. When his brothers were full of envy, his father loved him. In his dungeon he had, besides his conscious innocence, the respect of his fellow-prisoners.

III. Let us turn from Joseph's circumstances to consider the character of the man as developed by them — the forgiving spirit which they perfected in him. In the great scene of his life with his brethren, we see the chief result of his sufferings. The self-asserting boy has become the self-controlled man; he can love enough to be able to hide his

love, to seem to be stern for the sake of others. The key to his conduct is the utterness of his forgiveness. The secret of his method with them was to try and bring out their best points. And that they may begin with real repentance, he tests the reality of their sorrow by putting them in prison; he takes Simeon and binds him—he demands Benjamin—knowing well that it would grieve Jacob—he demands him in order to test them, to see if they would again break their father's heart by giving up Rachel's other child; and when Benjamin comes he still dissembles his love, he goes through the farce of eating, and drinking, and merriment, though he weeps in his own chamber because he cannot claim Benjamin as his own. Again he lets them go and has them brought back on the charge of stealing, and the result is that Benjamin must stay behind and be his slave. This is the crowning test towards which he has been working all through; if they will give up Benjamin as they did him, they are not really cured, but if they will not, if they really love their father too much to wreak vengeance on his favourite and to "bring down his gray hairs with sorrow to the grave," then envy, hatred, and malice must have been expelled from them, then he by his self-control had taught them a much-needed lesson. And this was actually the result. Anything they would endure for themselves, slavery

or death, but they could not, and would not abandon Benjamin and break their father's heart. He brought them to declare their unflinching devotion to Jacob and Benjamin, he restored their self-respect by proving to them that they were different men from what they used to be, and then when all was effected he revealed himself to them.

His methods, strange as they are to our modern ideas, impossible to our modern standards, have this true conception at the bottom of them, that men are not really cured till they have regained their self-respect. All virtuous and healthy moral living has its foundation on the human side in self-respect; and it is only by remembering this that we can ever deal safely with others whether we tell them of our forgiveness or not. But only those who, like Joseph, have the forgiving spirit perfected in them can ever deal thus with others.

In all ages the Christian spirit thus justifies itself; it conquers all things, even the machinations of treachery—it shows itself as the only really successful spirit. Men cannot injure us by calumny or falsehood except so far as they exasperate us and cause us to forget ourselves. No man is really dishonoured by prison or bonds or calumny; he is only dishonoured by his own acts. No outward circumstances, abuse, injustice, ingratitude,

can harm us unless we let them; if we choose they may do us good. The Christian spirit robs them of their power for evil—this is the secret of its most splendid triumphs, of its perpetual victory. Love transmutes all curses and forms blessings out of them. Joseph met his brothers' jealousy with this spirit, and out of it came a large-hearted forgiveness and an unrivalled power of dealing with others. So it is ever, our enemies become our friends when their slanders deepen in us more heavenly graces. They may do their worst, but they only give us the divine blessedness of forgiving them.

Its forgiving spirit, then, is the first characteristic of Joseph's inward disposition. The other is its patient study of human nature. No life teaches us better the necessity of a patient study of human nature, not only on the part of parents and teachers, but on the part of all who in any fashion will help others. Joseph's experience of human nature, in the caravan, in Potiphar's house, and in the prison was many-sided, and we can see in his interviews with his brethren that he had treasured up its lessons. He had learnt self-control, so that he did not fall on their necks and weep directly they said that they were sorry; he was sincerely sorry for them, but he did his weeping in private till he had made them ready for his sympathy. He put them in like circumstances and proved

to demonstration that they were really sorry before he revealed himself to them. He did all this because he had learnt self-control. He did not bring out his old dreams of pre-eminence and prove to them that he was right and they were wrong; he was too sincerely intent on helping them to do anything of the kind. He had studied human nature for all these years to such purpose that there was moral and spiritual wisdom in his strange treatment of them. He not only convinced himself that they were sorry, but he did what was far more difficult, he convinced them that they were sorry, and then he laid a strong foundation for mutual confidence in their future relations. He must have studied mankind much to be able to do this.

Too often we, who have to teach others lessons, omit this necessary qualification. Some of us are too wrapped up in ourselves to understand others; others will not take the trouble to repress themselves enough. They deliver their testimony and never stop to see how God's spirit is working in others, and then they wonder how it is that things slip out of their hands, how their own children turn to other counsellors rather than to themselves. We must study others if we are to be of any use; and to study them to any purpose we must begin by studying ourselves. We must know ourselves before we can know others, otherwise

we shall only see men as trees walking. We must treasure up our experiences, we must know how God is training ourselves, how He uses all hard things to discipline us. Unless we do we shall never understand others; and if we undertake to train them, whether we are rough with them or fall on their necks and weep, it will be mere haphazard work. He who knows himself knows how hard it is to train and educate himself by the will of God; he knows the necessity of self-discipline and self-restraint; he takes hard things when they come as a means of learning these lessons, and so he gains power to understand and to help others. He has patience to listen to their woes, he has insight to pierce through their self-deceit; he has the instinct that guides him to the real point and gives him power to deal with it. He does not plunge wildly in unknown waters; he knows himself, he knows the subtle and strange workings of self-love, he knows how God has dealt with himself by hardness and trial, and so he is able to apply his knowledge, while at the same time he is self-controlled enough to be patient with others.

These, then, are two requisites for doing good to others—self-knowledge and self-control; these were in Joseph's case the results of life in the caravan and in the prison, and of the unjust accusation. And if you and I will only try to

use our opportunities for renewed self-knowledge and self-control as they arise, if only we will let the "word of the Lord" try us, even when "the iron enters into our soul," we shall gain a like power, we shall be of some use in our generation. We may not conform to received notions and maxims of behaviour in our methods of dealing, we may shock the formalist and offend the mere shallow pietist; but whatever we do will be referable to no fretful outburst of caprice but to one or other of the eternal laws and principles of God, and will be marked by that Heavensent wisdom which sooner or later is 'justified of all her children.'

*Note.*—I owe some of the thoughts of this sermon to one by the Rev. H. Whitehead.

## XII.

## SOCIAL HOPE.

"Many there be that say, who will shew us any good?"—PSALM iv. 6.

IT is always a comfort when we are depressed and downhearted at the outlook around us, to find that there have been men in other days who have had to pass through the same experience. There was in David's day a good deal of pessimism flying about like some foul disease; a good deal of wholesale and thoughtless depreciation both of things generally, and of man and his condition; there were men then who deliberately declared life to be a woe and a curse, not worth living, who criticised everything not with a view to bettering it, but with a view to cheapening it and making it out to be worthless.

There are such men in every age who live to damp and depress our spirits; a walk with them is worse than a day of fog; their very look is depressing. And there are many varieties of such men. There is one variety which is peculiarly irritating—viz., the conceited pessimist, the man

who has an inordinately good opinion of himself, and who has somehow awakened to the fact that others (owing to their singular blindness and obtuseness) do not share it; he is a pessimist because his hand is against every man. His uneasy conviction that he is not valued as he ought to be, makes it certain to him that the times are out of joint. Then there is the pessimism of the disillusionised pleasure-seeker and of the whimpering sentimentalist; there is the pessimism of the dogmatist, who finds his own formulas are not universally accepted—the man who tells you that though there is much activity in religion, yet that it is of no use because men are weak in doctrine. Then there is the bitter cynicism of the newspaper satirist or of the magazine philosopher; and what is most piteous and pathetic of all, the silent bewilderment of those who cannot make it all out, who sit bewildered before the changed and changing order of the world with no hope for themselves or for others.

Many there be that survey the religious outlook, the social order, or the individual specimens of life around them, and cry, with no sign of expectation in their voice, "Who will shew us any good?"

And the strength of this utterance lies in the fact that it does not represent the most shallow view; it professes to look beneath the surface and to see through things, but it does not see far enough. The most superficial view of all is that of the cheer-

ful optimist, who will not allow that there is anything amiss. Things have done well with himself, and he is not disposed to allow that they can go wrong with anyone else.

The official ecclesiastical view about the Church of England generally adopts this attitude. No one would ever gather from the rose-coloured descriptions of parishes and organisations which are often given, what are the gaps and leaks, what are the failures to touch and interest the real life of a parish. The Church of England and her services have a great attraction for a certain class, and we are very thankful for the often excellent work she does among them; but there are whole regions of life in London which she only touches through the occasional accident of some gifted or sympathetic personality, not because those regions are incapable of being touched, but because she trusts too much to a machinery that has not been adapted to their wants and needs.

"Faith in machinery is our besetting sin," says Matthew Arnold, "often machinery absurdly disproportioned to the end, but always machinery as if it had a value in and for itself." But the optimist, who speaks in Convocation, or at a meeting of a Diocesan Conference about the grand work which is being done, or who spouts his windy declamation at some packed meeting, has never looked at facts as they are; has only looked at

the crowd in some popular church on a Sunday evening, and omitted to walk down some popular thoroughfare during church time, and see there the crowd which neither the church nor any other religious body touches.

No man, then, either about religious or social life, can really look at things as they are and be contented with the sort of cheerful optimism which characterises an Archdeacon's charge or a Diocesan Report. He goes deeper; he begins to look at things as they are, and then comes the day of danger; he is disillusionised and he runs to the other extreme; because there are dull spots, there is no sun; because there are sick people, there is no health; because there are failures, there is no success. He crawls like a rabbit into his hole, and seated there he says, "I have got through the surface and its simple presumptions; I have seen through things; *here* there is no sunlight, no beauty, all is dark and dreary and miserable; religion is played out." He is below the surface; he has passed out of the stage of dreams and charms; he has seen many things, but has he got far enough yet? There is a further stage if a man gets deep enough, where he will learn to hope again; the stage where he sees not what things look like, but where he sees what life is for, and that the object of life is not to gain a success nor to avoid a failure, but to live for God and

to live for man. Then whether the sun shines or not; whether things are dark and dreary in religion, or whether he feels that its real power is telling; whether society is advancing or deteriorating, he is still able to hope because he is trying to live for God and for man.

And then, further, the same Voice which taught him that, speaks to him about others also. He sees that untoward and crooked things mean education in character; that the experiences of life do not end in themselves, but that they have power to make men into something else; and so he passes into the centre, the heart of things. And then the lost things come back again; the failures that seemed to destroy everything come back as instruments of higher work, and thus the adjustment comes in. Then it is that a new hope begins to dawn.

"Experience," says St Paul, "worketh hope." How strange the saying sounds! And yet it does. The man who has gone through this experience has gained a deeper knowledge of God He understands the drift of Christ's life better; he sees that, however hopeless things look, there is still Christ; there is still the Christ-appeal waiting, and scheming, and contriving to get itself heard by every man. He sees a living force within things, not a dead Christ, who has merely left a will behind Him which a cold and dogmatic priest-

hood, an autocratic ministry, are to interpret in set forms, and chilling sentences, and dignified warnings, but a living Christ, Whose heart is palpitating behind every unselfish action, Who is living in every brave and noble endurance, and bearing Himself up under every failure, and spreading His Spirit wherever He can find a heart that will carry Him on and show Him to others.

He has made, then, the great discovery, not that everything is going on splendidly because religious machinery is so perfect, but that Christ is manifested in every unselfish movement of the day; that Christ is leading man to find Himself within man; that He is bringing men to understand the view of the deepest truths—*e.g.*, that the Communion of Saints means that every life lives by every other life; that the Communion of His Sacred Body and Blood is not only a reward for virtue or even only a means of individual growth, but a social symbol of man's communion with man, and that the unworthy communicant is he who does not find the Christ in others and looks only for Him in himself.

"The secret of vision," says a great writer, "is undying hope." What we can hope for really, even two or three of us, of that we shall soon see the germs; what we do not hope for may be under our very feet, and we are blind, we cannot see it. Let us think what it is that we can hope for, and

then we shall advance towards seeing it. We hope for a purer Church, a more Christ-like Church than the world has ever seen; a Church whose creeds have become inspirations. We hope for the day when men will make 'God their religion, instead of making religion their God.' We hope for an ideal reunion when men who are now with us in their wish to be with us, and in their wish to preserve the Christ-spirit of service, will be so one with us that we and they shall no longer talk of reunion, or get up misleading discussions to promote it, but shall find ourselves so enwrapped and so possessed by the Christ-spirit that we shall find such discussions intolerable. Then, at last, we shall find within ourselves a sense of oneness with every heart that has translated into life the Christ command, "As ye would that men should do unto you, even so do unto them"; we shall recognise that as the really encircling bond; we do so now in our deepest moments, but the conviction that it is so will grow, till God shows us the way openly to acknowledge it. We hope for the day when man will think of the service of man as the deepest religious privilege, when that ideal feet-washing shall somehow become practically expressed in all our lives; when men shall seek not for patronage, but for opportunities of service; when the Church shall be no more seen haggling for its rights, but anxious to let everyone see how every detail in the life of the community

is dear to it, how it believes in trust and generous dealing, how it has caught the Christ-spirit of "losing its life to save it." We hope, too, to see the ideal of Christ's teaching in the State as in the Church. We hope to see men believing that He meant what He said; that the day of non-natural interpretation is over; that He intended to create a vast social change; to make the employer regard his workman as his brother; to make every man regard injury to woman as injury to his own sister; to lead men to find Himself not in some mystical dream, but in the often unselfconscious wants of those around them.

We hope, and we have grounds for hope; we are beginning to see the dawn of what fifty years ago would have been impossible. We have found that even companies can think of the bodies and souls of those whom they employ as well as of their own dividends; we have found that it has at last dawned on all, in a measure, that man is more than money, character than possessions, purity and decency than high rents.

To the young we make our great appeal, to those who will carry these beginnings on by God's help to brighter conclusions than we shall live to see. To them we would say, "Be true to facts as they are, study them, acknowledge them; be afraid of the cant and dishonesty that bolsters up anything merely because it is conventional; but at the

same time learn to recognise the workings of Christ's Spirit in things around; see these workings in what seems to be the unavailing protest; see them in the growing shame of acknowledged selfishness; see them in the more righteous public utterances of our leading statesmen; see them in the spirit that sets on foot everywhere new means for benefiting the social life of people—in clubs, in polytechnic institutions, and in all agencies of the kind. Above all, believe in the power of human aspiration when touched by the living Christ. Hope everything from man because of the divine possibilities within him. And when he disappoints you, and when you find no appreciation and no response, still remember that your place is among your brethren, however far they may stray." We have indeed a sure ally within everyone through the divinely planted instinct of human inspiration. Above all we have the certainty that Christ is at work with others as with ourselves; that God has a voice through Christ for everyone of His children, and that in a thousand ways of which we never know, if we catch the real social spirit of Christ, even we may help to translate that voice to them.

## XIII.

## CHRISTIAN MISSIONS.

"Thus saith the Lord of Hosts; In those days it shall come to pass, that ten men shall take hold out of all languages of the nations, even shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, We will go with you: for we have heard that God is with you."—ZECHARIAH viii. 23.

"TEN men of all the languages of the nations," that is to say, the day of Pentecost is to be the reversal of Babel—all are to have one language in whatever tongue they speak; for ten is the symbol of the whole, all numbers meet in it and start from it again. Ten is constantly used in the Old Testament as the symbol of the whole; "ten women shall break your bread in one oven"; "those men have tempted me now these ten times, and have not hearkened to my voice," and here again in this prophecy which speaks of the day when all nations shall acknowledge Christ. The description is very graphic, "ten men shall take hold of the skirt of Him that is a Jew"—of the son of David—"saying, We will go with you, for we have heard that God is with you."

The question is always before us, What is the

present prospect of the realisation of this glowing description? For eighteen centuries Christ's army has been going forward; it has grown from the little band gathered into the upper room, from the first worshippers of "Him that is a Jew," into a great organisation which has penetrated every nation. It has re-made national life in the West; it has (with whatever drawbacks and abatements) proved itself, at any rate there, to be the impulse not only of high hope but of strong duty — it has abolished slavery and worked great change in social life; it has simply revolutionised the whole position of one sex. And yet, with all this to its credit, it has still hardly touched the East; it is still outnumbered by the great religions which were there before it: it has not found the way yet to adapt itself to the Eastern way of looking at things. Once Christianity held the East, but since the logic of the West triumphed over the philosophy of the East, since Augustine superseded Origen, and the methods of Aristotle prevailed over those of Plato, Christianity has not had much to say to the Eastern world. One cannot help wondering, sometimes, how far the intensely Western dress, which Christianity has assumed, may not have to be modified before Christ is again recognised as the satisfaction of the hopes of Asia. Of course, the narrow Anglo-Saxon point of view which regards English Christianity as the only conceivable form of it, will never understand

this. It has had its way only too much, and has set up in India a sort of State Church, with every English institution (down even to the appointment of Arch-deacons) reproduced; and the inevitable result of such an unpardonable want of imagination has followed. But that narrow and insular view is being, we hope, discredited among all thoughtful men.

Let us think, for a moment, of the religions of the world, and their comparative sway. Taking the population of the world at fourteen hundred and seventy millions, four hundred and fifteen millions are professing Christians, four hundred and seventy millions are Buddhists, but nearly four hundred millions of those in China are Confucians, and probably there are not more than one hundred million pure Buddhists in the world. Hinduism has another two hundred million; while the most active and aggressive religion of the East, Mahomedanism, has about one hundred and seventy million adherents. Roughly speaking, Buddhists, Hindus, and Mahomedans share the religion of India. Of these Buddhism is more a philosophy of pessimistic negation and a system of practical ethics than a religion. Modern Hinduism is a kind of polytheistic pantheism; mainly a system of caste, and of ceremonial divorced from morals. The chief contrast between Buddhism, which is practically atheistic, and Hinduism, which is polytheistic and

idolatrous, lies in the fact that one has a complete system of practical ethics and the other has no moral code at all. Mahomedanism stands quite by itself—a strong missionary force and a great witness to Monotheism, but with a very defective moral code tolerating both gross sensualism and savage cruelty. Such is roughly the present state of religion in India. Now it seems at first sight that the Christian religion, which came from the East, ought to find itself at home with an Eastern nation; yet this is not so. Out of two hundred and fifty millions of inhabitants, there are two millions of Christians of every kind in India; that is in itself a sufficiently discouraging fact when we think of all the efforts that have been made. Nor can it be truly said that the outlook is very promising. It used to be thought that education would do much. We have educated India, and in doing so we have acted quite rightly. We have endeavoured to raise the nation to a platform from which it would be capable of aspiration, but the expected result has not followed. Perhaps we have not sufficiently considered them in the kind of education which we have given them. We have gone to a deep-thinking religious people and have tried to give them first a Western civilisation in material things, and then a Western education, and now we try to give them a Western version of the Christian religion—a sort of transplanted Establishment—to complete it. And naturally our efforts have

been very partially successful. Of course, it may be said that we could do nothing else, but surely there is some defect of imagination about that statement. The best men who are working in India now—the men in the Oxford Mission at Calcutta which I am asking you to help, and in the Cambridge Mission at Delhi—are working on different lines; they are not trying so much to convert the natives as to discuss questions with them, to try to get their point of view, to see how the Christian faith can find its meeting-point with what is best in the great religions of the East; they are not afraid of seeing what possible light may be thrown, from an Eastern point of view, over a religion that had its birth in the East. In that attitude there seems to be the seed of a great hope for the future. But in the method of decrying and depreciating everything non-Christian, in treating professors of venerable religions as though they were all alike idolaters—*e.g.*, in confounding Mahomedanism with idolatry; in the rough-and-ready English fashion of showing an infinite pity and compassion for whatever a black might think, in all the alliances between commercial enterprise—with a possible bullet in the background as a gentle enforcement—and Christian missions—alliances which are apparently still so fascinating to Churchmen of a certain type—there is no hope, except the hope of getting rid of such a spirit. It has drawn on it the scorn of men. Talk

to any straightforward, honest, manly soldier—I do not mean the mere worldly man, but the man who does really care for Christ and the Church—about a certain type of Indian missions, and you will receive a disagreeable impression of the facts as they appear to an ordinary mind.

If I ask you to support this mission, it is only because I am certain that it does not proceed on those lines at all, but that it is preparing the way of the Lord both in the way that it approaches Eastern religions and in the methods it uses.

The whole problem of India deserves the serious consideration of Englishmen as well as Churchmen. We have produced a certain state of things, and the question is, how are we going to deal with it? It is a state full of danger from a national point of view if we treat it wrongly. We have educated the Indian, and the result is the Baboo. We hoped that secular education would have issued in a great movement towards Christianity. It has not, in the opinion of the most experienced, done anything of the kind. I will quote Sir C. Turner—"Unfortunately that result has been produced which too often accompanies secular education—viz., intellectual conceit. Many young men in India have no sooner obtained some knowledge than they fancy that they have mastered all knowledge, and, like many in Europe, they not only repudiate the wisdom of their ancestors as folly, but they persuade themselves that it has

been reserved for them to discover something much better than the Christian religion. The educated Hindoo very naturally desires to be in the forefront of the intellectual movement, and he weighs the creeds offered to him with the calmness of a youthful and inexperienced philosopher. He is moved to do so by another consideration. He is himself the representative of a very ancient civilisation, and he thinks that no revelation can be really trustworthy which was not made to such a very ancient and distinguished people as the Hindus." National feeling then comes to the front and he says, "If I am to profess a new creed, let me see what I can construct for myself."

The state of things at Corinth is reproduced. The Christian doctrine is regarded by many an educated Hindoo as folly, while to the old Hindoo—the man moved by national feeling—this revelation which comes from a foreign race is a stumbling-block.

Another difficulty with which we have to contend is our inability to give employment to those whom we have educated, and it is a very serious one. Employment, at any rate, tends to create moral character. Here we have the warning—the terrible warning—of Russia, which has educated masses of people that it cannot employ, and has produced Nihilism. We cannot evoke talent and then give no field for its employment without serious danger. But the religious problem is more difficult than even

the political one, though it is mixed with it. The question is, how are we to get the soil ready? We, here in the West, have worked our way by hundreds of years' training and discipline to a certain moral character, which is the result of many failures, and yet of strivings and efforts after the Christian ideal; but we cannot convey this preparation to a race that has had no training. For moral character is not made in a day; it is the fruit and the outcome of the grace of God, of the tears and sighs and aspirations of generations; its toughness and fibre is like that of the oak, a matter of gradual formation. We have to face these facts most seriously. We have civilised and in a fashion educated the Indian; how are we going to give him moral character? For that is the way by which Christianity must come to him. It will not come as a State Church or as a code of doctrines. There are Englishmen, thank God, still found to face this hardest task; they recognise their responsibilities; they are ready to undertake the burden and the strain with the old undaunted courage and indomitable faith, and to show that England is true to her divine destiny. The mind-power of Oxford and Cambridge, consecrated to Christ, has found its way thither in those ties of Christian brotherhood and fellowship, which are exhibited in these missions. We do not doubt that through their work, increased and enlarged as it must be, there may come for

India a great future, and to England the real greatness of having helped her to that future. At any rate here is an attempt to work on true lines. These men do not baptise half-convinced people who only fall back at the first opportunity; who may serve to swell the numbers in reports, but ultimately only increase the hindrance to all real conversion. "We do not try," said one of its members to me the other day. "We do not try to convert people; we devote ourselves largely to education, and are ready to discuss with them any question of religion, and some, when they are thoroughly convinced, have been baptised, but we work in patience and without forcing."

It is this noble, self-sacrificing preparation for the Gospel which India really needs, and which, not only through this body, but through the self-sacrifice of many devoted men, who are working on true lines, is going forward there.

Of course, I cannot but be aware that the tendency of some minds in our own day is antagonistic to missions altogether. A very plausible case can be put forward. It can be said that we have enough to do at home; that such as we are in London have no business to be trying to convert others before we reform our own manifest heathenism. It is really a shameful plea. It is a plea for exemption on the ground of our own neglect and sin. It is like the murderer of his father imploring a judge to have

pity on his orphanhood. It shows that we have failed to take in the most elementary notion of the Christian religion. Really, we have known and received Christ, not for ourselves as a personal possession, not as a jewel to be worn, but as a possession to be handed on. "He that will keep his life shall lose it, and only he that shall lose his life will keep it"; that is the Christian principle. The Christ life must expand and go out and share itself with others, or it will wither. Of course, only those who do not value Christianity for themselves could ever argue in that way. Others, again, object to missions because we have not simply spread the knowledge of Christ through them. It is said that missionaries have been pioneers of trade, and that trade has often meant the introduction of drink and the demoralisation of native races. But the connection is really a purely arbitrary one. If it could be proved that Christian missionaries had introduced drink or other evils, it would be quite to the point to allege this as a difficulty in the way of supporting them; but that Christian missionaries can be held responsible for the actions of traders because they happen to come with them is as unfair a proposition as can be laid down. You may come in at that Church door along with a pickpocket, but you would scarcely think it fair for anyone to charge you with being a partner in the firm. Of course, in India, we are dealing with a subject race, and that in-

tensifies our difficulty. The Englishman abroad is not always a good advertisement of the superiority of his own religion. A closer view of him at home sometimes leaves a more favourable impression. A native of India some time ago came to England as a member of a deputation who were trying to influence members of Parliament on some Indian question at the General Election. When he returned to India he was asked what had struck him during his visit to London. "Well," he said, "two things: one was the politeness of the London policeman"—there we are none of us astonished;—"and the other, that Englishmen believe in their religion." "Why," said the questioner, "you have lived in the city of Madras, you have seen English Churches, and you have heard English church bells." "Ah!" he said, "I know all about that; you Anglo-Indians go to Church on Sunday, but that is a sort of official thing." He had never seen the attention paid in India to religion that he saw in England, and he regarded worship there as a sort of public ceremonial which the State Officers attended as men do the Levée—which it was the duty of functionaries to attend. When he came to England he saw that Englishmen believed in their religion. I hope that that observation would not have to be corrected on closer acquaintance, and that at any rate we who are here do believe in it enough to show our sympathy with those who are working on true lines, and

influencing, by their self-denying lives, the more thoughtful of the natives in Calcutta.

There are two reflections which I would leave with you in order to induce you to support this mission, and meet boldly the insinuations which are often levelled at those who are really living heroic lives. One is the foul, fetid character of Hindu idolatry that still exists to a large extent, though the more educated Hindus have given it up. Professor Lindsay enumerates the following as objects of the ordinary Hindu worship—trees, stones, a bit of rock, a pillar, a curiously shaped hummock, a fossil, an ammonite, snakes, monkeys, goats, an engine, and a fat boy, who was waiting for the train at a Bombay station, and who placidly sucked sugar candy, while his worshippers, who believed him to be an incarnation of god, knelt round him. No doubt the Brahmins explain their idol worship by an all-pervading symbolism, but the symbolism is, as it were, an afterthought—a touch of shame, independent of the mood of the worshippers. "If," said Mr Barnett, of Whitechapel, to me after his visit to India, "If we could get men to see the foulness of heathenism, the degradation of idolatry, we should make them earnest about Christian missions."

And the other consideration is the debt which we owe to India—that great country where so many of our brothers have found name and fame, where so

many, whom we have known and loved, have found a glorious death. We owe it to ourselves as a nation to give them of our best Government; we owe it to ourselves as a Church to bring before them in the highest possible way the Example and Grace of Him Whom we own and recognise and adore as the Lord and Saviour of the world, the One and only Hope of all Nations.

## XIV.

## DEATH AS A FRIEND.

"It is appointed unto men once to die."—HEBREWS ix. 27.

IT is hard to think of death in life, especially when life is strong and healthy, and yet death is the one permanent thing before us—the one thing that is in front of us all; and we are always being reminded of its inevitable approach. It comes home to us in such varying fashions; it has been making its gaps among us here lately; we look here and there and miss a face; we know that soon we shall be missed—for a bit; it is the one certainty, and yet how hard it is to think about it—how it breaks in upon us and jars us.

We are so interested, so busy, so hopeful; we have such large plans, we are full of affairs or interested in our children, and the thought of death with its cold, hard negation of all action, makes us sick and wretched. It is as though we had waked out of sleep and found the murderer's hand at our throat; we are startled, surprised, or at least flurried; we do not want to die or

to think of death yet. Perhaps we are going to repent, to give up some things and begin others because they are religious—how are we to do this if we are to go out into the cold night of death and face all the past? And yet there is no greater danger than to forget death altogether. With some, no doubt, it assumes too great a prominence; it paralyses their usefulness, it cripples their energies, it takes the heart out of their plans; but these are not the majority. So many just need the seriousness in their lives which the thought of death brings; men who make profane and filthy jokes; women who talk recklessly, wildly, blindly, far below their best selves, in that irresponsible and foolish fashion, which seems to be becoming so common. There is a subtle sense of responsibility, not insisted on or forced into prominence, but subdued and yet alive—the underneath tone that gives to the best life its strength and charm—which comes from having faced the thought of death; it produces the feeling that whatever the man treats of—literature, art, or politics—he is not playing with things, that he knows that for him things are not going to last as they are, and that just because he knows that, he feels a sense of responsibility about how he touches them, that he touches what he does touch seriously. It is not awakened terror, nor crippling paralysis of energy, that the thought of death ought to produce

in us, it is rather the feeling that we must work our very best, because "the night cometh when no man can work." But along with that there is the underlying tone of seriousness, which is conscious that death will come, and of all that death means. Let us look at it in that way and deepen our seriousness.

I. We must die; another must fill our place, must sit in our study, read our books, use our furniture; the time will come when people will talk of us to others who did not know us, and try to describe us—what we were and what we said. We must die. We listen to some preacher now, who at first moved and stirred us; but we get used to him, then patronise him, and by degrees get hard and dull. So it is with death. Is any preacher so moving, everywhere warning us, by newspaper, by funeral, by the gaps and gulfs around us, of the inevitable end? Let us think, what will it be like to die? We have all seen death; we can describe its outward phenomena; we have many of us experienced that awful feeling of impotence, when we would give anything to stop its power over another; we have been moved by death deeply, we know what it looks like; we have seen it in every phase from the gradual sinking to sleep to the convulsive agony whose end we longed for; but to see another die, is not to die oneself. To die, what is it? To

die is to go hence; to die is to go into the unknown; to die is to meet God face to face, to see Him and in Him our own possibilities, moral, religious, mental — all alike — what we are, what we might have been, and what we have let ourselves become; to die is to see light, to come out of the shadows that make often ugly things look beautiful into the clear light that shows up everything; to die is to see God, and to see God is to face one's memories, to quicken them, to renew them, to disinter those long-buried sins and shames which we hoped were forgotten and done with; to die is to see Him with whom "all things are naked and open"; to die is to see one's chances, to see how and why one missed the opportunity of moral and mental growth, and let conscience be stifled and reason decay; to die is to see one's misused influence direct and indirect; the way in which even a look, a tone, a pose, the paint on the face, or the manner of a dress, left an impression and lost us the kingdom over hearts which God had prepared for us; to die is to see that to which self-love blinds us now, it is to leave illusions behind, to see the empty nakedness of those excuses which we make for ourselves, but should not accept from others. Do you not know how easy it is to deceive yourself? You cannot help seeing how easily others deceive themselves. Is there not enough in the possibilities of self-deceit alone to make one care-

ful, sober, and anxious? Is it not the one thing you feel about many people that they never know themselves? Why is it?

It is so hard to be true where you love much, unless your love is of the best kind. If you love another, you are blind probably to what everyone else sees about him. People smile as you rhapsodise over some commonplace individual whom you have chosen to marry or to set up as an idol; your love has blinded you. I know how such love, if it has any element of sacrifice in it, glorifies and redeems life, but nevertheless it blinds.

Ah! think how you love yourself; no lover was ever so devoted as you are; and is your love of yourself the best kind—is there no petting and spoiling, no false excuses, no evasions of what everyone else sees but the blinded lover? It is not to make difficulties but to make things real that I ask these questions; how can you know yourself, who love yourself so much? Is it not only too possible that your first real sight of yourself will come when you die—when the illusions of self-love are swept away by the clear daylight of the world of realities?

II. What shall we see when we see ourselves as we are? To face this question really will transform life into a new key; but it will inspire and not depress; it will make our prayers a reality, a talking with God,—not a muttered form

but a talking with God, so that we speak and He speaks. It will make our almsgiving a reality. We resent appeals for money now, but what shall we think, many of us, when we come face to face with the hundreds and thousands of pounds spent on ourselves, and the shillings and sixpences doled out to God? How shall we feel when we look at the proportion and find out that instead of giving a tenth, as the Jews did, we have not given a five-hundredth part—that good works have languished while we feasted and clothed ourselves in scarlet? Again, what can we think even now of the effect which we have on others, of our sharp bitter speeches; of the wounds inflicted on gentle souls; of the deeds whose memory makes our cheeks tingle; what of our unkind stories, our imputation of low motives, our love of scandal, our readiness to take offence? And when we come to see over against that, all that we might have been—a fountain of noble influences, an inspiration of high thoughts and generous acts—shall we not at last cry out, 'If only I had seen in that my day the things that belonged to my peace; but alas! they were hid from my eyes?'

"The things that belong to thy peace." What are they? The Body given, the Blood shed, the Communion of the Life of Christ, the Bible that would have told thee of the Perfect Life, the prayers

that would have filled thee with inspiration, the gifts to others that would have purified thy pleasures, the study that would have braced thy mind and made thee a power, the self-control that would have made thy will a strength to the needy and a shadow to the weak; to see it all, all that you might have been, all that you might have done; all the causes you might have helped by your words, if only you had made yourself fit and able to speak words; the influence you might have exerted on your friends if only you had stopped that leakage of self-indulgence—all that you might have been and all that you are—to die is to see that.

What would it be to wake up and see that one's life had been one long mistake—a source of weakness through one's easy good-nature, a hindrance through one's temper and tyranny; or a parasite life sucking the life-blood of another—appealing to him through some physical link and intellectual sympathy, using that appeal to drain away all that was noble and good in him—that one had been a bloodsucker, a vampire—a horror from which one turns in loathing only to find that it is oneself—oneself whom others flattered so skilfully, oneself who had always such a plausible case to present to oneself, whose faults seemed such trifles. What would it be to see oneself a mean man, a hindrance, a weakness, a parasite—and yet oneself. It is the

self-disclosure of death which makes the thought of death as an enemy so natural. The veils must be torn off our eyes, the blinds must be pulled up, the bewildering light must be faced; we must see God and ourselves. "The sting of death is sin"—not sin that we own and repent of, not sin that we put away, but sin that we cling to and invent fine names for, sin that we are not honest about, sin which we will not put away; not sins of infirmity, not the losing our way, but the treason of our will, the disloyalty of our heart to its best inspiration, the laziness that we call carefulness, the selfishness that we call business habits, the littleness that we call natural feeling, and the stinginess that we call prudence. One day we shall die, and then we must see it all as it is.

III. But then it is uncertain when this will happen, and there is our loophole: though it must come, it may be far off; though it must come, there will be time to prepare for it. Prepare for it! Ah, even if there be not bewildering weakness or paralyzing pain, or maddening fever, or a sudden cutting off, even if these (which so often are) be not, how can we begin *then* to prepare for that for which every day is a preparation? Every day has its own work of preparation to do for the next day. We cannot start without grievous loss in the middle of life; the movement must be weakened by every opportunity that we miss, every day that we delay. We

are the children of the past now, and death will find us more so than ever.

> Will they
> Who failed under the heat of this life's day
> Support the fervours of the heavenly morn?
> No, no; the energy of life may be
> Kept on after the grave, but not begun;
> And he who flagged not in the earthly strife,
> From strength to strength advancing; only he
> Mounts to eternal life.

Death is not the reversal of life's habits, it is only a carrying them into new conditions where the energy of life may be kept on.

Take it where you can test it. What about your prayers? If there is any place where we feel the effect of the past on its weakening side, it is there. You are not satisfied with the way in which you say them, or with the trouble you take to say them better; you acquiesce in a form of words that mean little, but often your real thoughts are far away. You could not talk to your friend, as you talk to God, without a sense of rudeness. But then we say it is so hard to attend. Yes, and what does that mean but that we to-day are the result of yesterday, that if to-day I am not master of my attention, if my thoughts are far away while my lips are uttering the most awful words, if while I am speaking to the Eternal I am dreaming without restraint of the idlest vanities—the history of it is that in past days I have taken

no trouble to check my carelessness and inattention, and that now I am reaping the fruit. The weakness of to-day is the echo of the betrayal of long ago, when life was still before us, when we could be masters of our attention; every day that we put off that struggle, it becomes more difficult.

IV. How, then, can we rise up higher? how can the thought of death give us that inspiration for living which lies in it? How can we rob it of its terrors, and learn to look at it only as the last of a long series of self-surrenders? By here and now consciously beginning to fight with our selfishness, to surrender ourselves to God's work, to sacrifice ourselves for man; to find out some worthy claimants on what we can give of ourselves, and then to give ourselves to some work that teaches or blesses, some task of rescue or prevention—some definite plan of self-denial, so that we may be able to help some one person, that someone's burden may be taken up. Life conquers death only in one way, and that is by sacrifice—just as death, alas! conquers life every day by selfishness. Thus, and thus only, death—the inevitable—may be transfigured; thus it becomes, even when it occurs in the order of nature, a true sacrifice. The death of the righteous, of the unselfish, of the self-sacrificing, even when it comes in the order of nature, wields a strange power; it makes even a commonplace life seem sublime to the sur-

vivors by the way in which it refines their recollections of it; it puts the personal feeling of jealousies, competitions, and irritations utterly and for ever aside; it ennobles work, and makes it bear much fruit. So it is that the dead parent, the dead friend, neglected in life or taken as a matter of course; the dead teacher, whose voice only seemed to cry in the wilderness, wields in death a power denied in life—a power over hearts and wills. The soldier who gives his life for his comrade; the brave men on our coasts who give their lives in every great storm, often to save unknown foreigners, exert a power in their death beyond any power exerted in their life; they purify the moral atmosphere all around them; they help to keep alive the respect for human nature which is often sorely tried; everywhere, when we are on the track of sacrifice, we are conscious of a moral power of incalculable force. Every lofty example which inspires and invigorates human effort is more or less consecrated by death. Certainly we had better not wait for men's deaths to learn the true lesson of their lives; but assuredly there is something about that lesson which we can never learn before. "If it die it bringeth forth much fruit."

Viewed thus, death is no longer the king of terrors—a ghastly, hideous, grim necessity; it is the crown and apex of a life of self-giving; it is the ennobling moment which makes a modest life

fruitful beyond words. We need not moan over its necessity. If we will let the thought inspire us, it will teach us to live that true life which death cannot conquer; which flows on uninterrupted in spite of death and through death; which passes through the dark waters only to overcome them; which only disappears from our sight to give itself into the hands of that Eternal Love Who accepts the death of His own as the last offering to Himself.

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x, 162p. ; 20cm.

14 sermons.

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